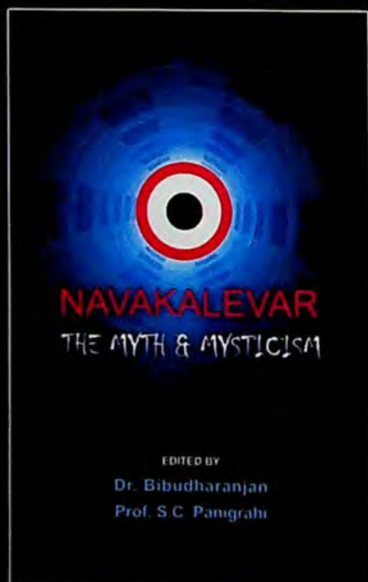
NAVAKALEVAR

THE MYTH & MYSTICISM

EDITED BY

Dr. Bibudharanjan

Prof. S.C. Panigrahi


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The flute's playing, but who's playing it ?
The lamp is buring without wick or oil
The lotus is blooming but it has no roots
When one flower blooms, so do a hundred
Just like the moonbird thinks of nothing but the moon
And the rainbird thinks of nothing but rain
The lover too has only one desire
He thinks of nothing but his beloved.

- Kabir

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PRAJNALOKA

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from the editors pen....

After 19 years the Nabakalebara of Lord Jagannath is being solemnised. All devotees across the country are overwhelmed by this event. Lord Jagannath is a mystery, that is why every devotee is unconditionally attracted to Him. Similarly Navakalebara is also a myth. This book is an attempt to know the unknowable. But everyone wants to know what is this Nabakalebara. The contributors of this volume have tried to reveal some new dimensions of Nabakalebara of Jagannath either through symbols, myths anecdotes etc. The editors humbly admit that the views expressed in this volume cannot explain fully the unexplainable phenomenon of Nabakalebara. We are grateful to the contributors of this volume who have tried their best to interpriet the Nabakalebara event.

THE IMPACT OF JAGGANATHA CULT ON ODIA NATIONALISM AND 'IDENTITY' FORMATION: A CONTEMPORARY DISCOURSE

Dr. Netajee Abhinandan

Lord Jagganatha has been the most dominant influence on Odia psyche, not merely as the prime deity but as the most potent symbol of Odia identity and culture. Lord Jagannath's relationship with Odisha and Odias can be traced back to the pre-historic time when this land was inhabited by the non-Aryans. The land was then known as 'Bratyabhumi', the land of bratyas - tribals and non-Aryans. Over the period, this relationship was increasingly strengthened, and ultimately, it became symbiotic. Lord Jagannath became the dominating influence over the socio-religious and cultural life of Odias. As a result, the Jagannath cult came to provide the religious boundary

to Oriyas. History testifies that battles have been fought and won in the name of Lord Jagganatha and he has been proclaimed as the "supreme ruler" of the Odia speaking people. In fact, when the Odia speaking people were divided into various political and administrative units in the 16th century, it was Lord Jagganatha who symbolized the sense of unity and oneness among the people leading to nationalist aspirations. As the *Rastra Devata* he helped in binding the heterogeneous elements of Odisha Empire together and maintaining its distinctive cultural identity. Even after the collapse of the Empire in the 18th century, Lord Jagganatha remained the focal point of reference for the nationalist forces who tried to build up Odia nationalism on the basis of its unique language and culture. During the British rule, Odisha witnessed two significant popular movements- the nationalist movement against the foreign domination and the language agitation demanding the unification of the Odia speaking tract under one administration that ran parallel to each other. Both the movements used the symbol of Lord Jagganatha to mobilize the people and gather strength. It was very apparently reflected in Odia literature during that period. Even the urbanized and educated Odias were emotionally attracted by Lord Jagganatha and looked towards him as a great source of inspiration. Thus, the symbol of Odisha Empire also became the symbol of Odia nationalism in late 19th and 20th centuries that was Lord Jagganatha. All the while he occupied a central position in the nationalistic thought process. In the current phase of globalization, as the indigenous cultural symbols and strands are losing their sheen, it is imperative to examine the impact of the Jagganatha cult on the nationalist thought and cultural life of Odisha. Moreover, in the context of the secular-communal

debate dominating the national political discourse, it is pertinent to analyze whether Lord Jagganatha can provide an inclusive gateway to the Odia people for their nationalistic outlet and also help them to maintain their unique cultural identity. The proposed paper would endeavour to answer these questions and consider the overall influence of Lord Jagganatha on Odia identity formation and cultural transformation in the contemporary period.

Lord Jagganath : The Political Master

In modern times, there had been innumerable invasions of Odisha by Marathas, Mughals and finally British. During all the invasions and occupations, the temple of Lord Jagganatha was the prime target of the enemy forces as it symbolized the well-being of both the state and its people. There were attempts to destroy the temple and desecrate the 'bigraha' of " Chaturdha Murati" and thereby compel the people to political subjugation. As per the historical records, the temple of Lord Jagannath had been invaded and plundered eighteen times by different forces and rulers. That is why 'bigraha' of " Chaturdha Murati" had to be shifted time and again to various regions of the state secretly by the servitors to save them from the attackers. They have remained untouched despite the best efforts of the invaders o desecrate them. And also, the temple of Lord Jagganath has remained unaffected. The people considered Lord Jagganatha not merely as 'deity' or 'God', but rather as their political master controlling their lives, society and state. He is considered to be the supreme ruler of the Universe and the Kings of Orissa including the ruler of Puri, called the Gajapati, are regarded as His representatives administering the affairs of the state only on his behalf. Administration was run in His name, wars were

fought with His blessings and justice was meted out with His sanction. In fact, the people of Odisha always considered themselves as the 'subjects' of a 'holy Jagganatha Empire'.[1] *Madala Panji,* the living treatise documenting the history of the temple and Odisha, was believed to be compiled for the first time in the late sixteenth century. In *Rajabhoga* section of *Madala Panji*, Lord Jagannatha has been described as "the king of the kingdom of Orissa", "the master or the lord of the land of Orissa" and "the god of Orissa". Various other scriptures and narrative poems composed by renowned poets are replete with such descriptions where Jagannatha has been described as the sole king of Orissa. Thus, apart from the socio-religious sphere, Lord Jagganatha had dominated the political sphere of the state as a symbol of legitimacy and Odia identity. Since the days of freedom struggle till now, almost all the political movements have tried to 'appropriate' Lord Jagganatha for gaining popular support and approval. In contemporary times, there has not been any political campaign or movement which has not aligned itself with Lord Jagganatha. In 1934, Gandhiji chose Puri to start his celebrated 'padayatra' for the cause of Harijan uplift and abolition of untouchability, under his social reconstruction campaign, from where he moved through Harekrushnapur, Chandanpur, Sakshigopal, Kadua Asram, Danda Mukundapur, Pipili, Balakati, Satyabhamapur, Balianta, Telengapenth, Kajipatna to finally reach Cuttack. In 1939, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, as the President of Indian national Congress, had also invoked Jagannath while starting his speech in Oriya, at Chandanpur in the suburbs of Puri. In 1936, after taking oath as the first Prime Minister of Odisha, just born as a separate province, K.C. Gajapati Narayan Dev, the Raja of Paralakhemundi went straight

to pay a ceremonial visit to Lord Jagannath though there was a bitter rivalry going on between the kings of Paralakhemundi and Puri at that point of time. Since then, it has become a kind of 'ritual' for every new Chief Minister to go to Puri for a 'darshan' of Lord Jagganath after oath taking and for every political party to launch its campaigning from Puri during elections. Also, there have been pitched political battles among the political parties on various issues related to the administration of Jagganath temple, transfer of Lord Jagganath's land to private companies and role of government and Puri Sankaracharya etc.

Lord Jagannath, as the presiding deity, acted as the unifying factor propelling the movements for establishment of Odisha as a separate province and the protection and promotion of Odia language, sculpture and architecture. Odisha, in fact, maintained its political independence for a long period of time as the people, warriors and rulers considered themselves 'divinely blessed and protected' by Lord Jagannath and fought valiantly every time there was a war against any outside force. Though Odisha was defeated by Samrat Ashok's army in the famous 'Battle of Kalinga' in third Century B.C., the mighty Chandashoka, as he was known, became Dharmashok giving up war and adopting Buddhism. Before this defeat, Maha Meghabahan Kharavela, the great Odia King, in first century B.C. established the first kingdom at Sisupalagada near present day capital city of Bhubaneswar defeating many mighty emperors across the country (including South India) propagating the rich cultural heritage of Lord Jagannath. In 1568, the powerful king of Ganga dynasty surrendered before Lord Jagannath with the royal edict that the entire kingdom of Kaling/Utkal belonged to Lord ,the king being a simple "Rout" (asistant) of Lord Jagannath.

The enemy forces rarely dared to attack Odisha apprehending 'divine backlash'. Even during the Maratha or British administration, it was the profound influence of Jagannath culture that kept the Odia people united as one political entity which finally resulted in Odisha becoming the first separate State on the basis of language in 1936. During British rule, whether Surendra Sai's war in Sambalpur during last part of 18th century or 'Paika Bidroha' in Khurda in 1918 and 1924, all were fought in the name of Lord Jagannath.

Lord Jagganath: The Symbol of Social Solidarity

Lord Jagganath is considered as 'Human Deity'. Just like any ordinary human being, he brushes his teeth, takes bath, changes his cloth, wears out robes and gold ornaments, enjoys 56 varieties of food (Mahaprasad), listens music and even dies and takes new birth. Jagganath culture has certainly helped in ameliorating the social divisions and distinctions and binding all sections- the so called 'high' and 'low' castes- into a cohesive social structure. As historian Himanshu Patnaik has commented:

The elements of diversity in Orissan society on the basis of caste or ethnicity came to be functionally tackled by the institution of 'Chhatisaniyoga' - a complex classification of 'division of labour' for services in the temple by 36 categories of servitors represented by all castes in an egalitarian system of services in the temple, under the benign supervision of the first servitor, the king who had consecrated his empire to the Lord. For nearly a millennium till date, this system has generated a matrix of cordial inter-caste relations. The perception of cultural pluralism and the levels of support for the same are ironed out

by the services rendered by the monastery of each sect of India that had initially vied with others for exclusive of deification of Lord Jagannath for itself. Thus has emerged a homogeneity and the acceptance of an integrative ideology for Orissa. [2]

During all rituals, festivals and celebrations, Lord Jagganath is invoked by every Odia household as one of the members of the family. Even for marriages, the first invitation card is sent to Lord Jagganath seeking his approval and blessings. The Puri Temple, open to all, has always inspired the people as symbol of equality, fraternity and brotherhood, where *Mahaprasad,* the sacred food, is offered to all, irrespective of their caste, creed, culture and position. People from different sections of the society relish His *Mahaprasad* sitting together in the 'Ananda Bazar' the common dining place inside the temple.[3]

The cult of Jagganath has always represented universal and composite culture amalgamating diverse social, cultural and religious traditions and thoughts. In Jagganath cult, "one can find the fulcrum of 'Universalization' and 'Parochialization' in the same token as well as 'modernization of tradition' and 'traditionalization of modernity'."[4] To quote Dr. Tapan Mohanty,

All Odias have species-being relationship in terms of their identity and origin with Lord Jagannath. They find their source of social life and fulfilment of community identity only in the mosaic of Shree Jagannath. The vast cultural expanse of Jagannath cult has provided them with an ambience and umbrage under which they grow, ramify and express themselves with utmost grace and grandeur as the 'Children of God'.[5]

Prof Patnaik highlights the unique social influence of

Lord Jagganath on people of Odisha both at an individual and community level:

The Jagannath culture has been a balancing act, always striking a balance between freedom and creativity on one hand and discipline and restraint on the other. The martial arts of Orissa originating from the 'Akhada' tradition of Puri for the defence of the pride and heritage of Orissa, the world famous Odissi dance and music coming out of the temple tradition, the open air theatre of discourses known as 'Mukta Mandap' are but a few illustrious examples of the former. While this freedom has been a personal necessity, the discipline has been a social compulsion.[6]

Lord Jagganth: The 'Mahanayak' of Odia Literature

The essence of Odisha's philosophical and cultural tradition and thought revolves around Lord Jagganath that has been manifested in various ways by thinkers, philosophers and litterateurs since ancient period. Sarala Dasa was perhaps the first Odia poet to highlight the region of Odisha and its people. Sarala Dasa reflected Odia life and locale in his works, drawing an outline of contemporary Odisha and its history as he perceived it. Significantly, he did this by breaking away from the dominant Sanskritic tradition and writing in Oriya instead of Sanskrit. Sarala Dasa wrote his magnum opus, the Mahabharata in the Odia language. Though he followed the main outline of the story of the Sanskrit Mahabharata, he made numerous deviations and added to it many stories of his own. Sarala Dasa's genius in indigenizing the Mahabharata reached its climax when he linked Sri Krishna's death at Dwaraka on the western coast of India with the emergence of Lord Jagannath at Neelachal-Puri on the

eastern coast. In the *Musali Parva* of his Mahabharata, he narrated Lord Jagannath's origin in such a way as to project it as a local event. The Lord was rooted in the Oriya land and locale. Thus, by a process of regionalization of the original Mahabharata and by linking Lord Jagannath's origin with Orissa, Sarala made the land sacred.[7]

The literary tradition created by Sarala Dasa was continued by the *Panchasakha* poets of the 16th century. The *Panchasakha* refers to five devotional poets, Balarama Dasa, Jagannath Dasa, Achyutananda Dasa,Yasobanta Dasa and Ananta Dasa of that period, who were not only contemporaries but also friends and collaborators. Like Sarala Dasa, they also rendered the Indian epics and Puranas in Odia and made them thoroughly indigenized. If Sarala Dasa is credited to have united in the Mahabharata all the rich but divergent traditions of Orissa into a collective whole, it was the *Panchasakhas* who continued and strengthened the tradition with full vigour.[8] Most noteworthy among their works is the Odia Bhagavata written by Jagganatha Dasa. Like the original Bhagavata, Jagannath's Bhagavata also depicted the incarnations of Lord Vishnu and the life and exploits of Lord Krshna in his heroic, pastoral and erotic aspects, however, consciously propagating the Jagannath cult in the Oriya-speaking region in the garb of Krshna devotionalism. By the 16th century, due to the ascendancy of Vaishnavism in Odisha, Lord Jagannath had been identified with Lord Vishnu and then Lord Krshna.[9] Conscious of this trend Jagannath Dasa used Krshna and Jagannath interchangeably throughout the Bhagavata. The re-creation of the Bhagavata in Oriya therefore, glorified and spread the cult of Lord Jagannath. Since Jagannath Dasa like other Panchasakha poets was an advocate of the

Jagannath-centric Vaishnavism and since Lord Jagannath and His abode Srikshetra Puri were the highest divine manifestations in their theological conception, he glorified both in his Bhagavata. Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata became one of the most popular religious compositions of the time and even today it is quoted. It can be found all over Orissa. Generally, villages used to have a *Bhagavata ghara* (house or room) where Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata was recited for villagers. The *Bhagavata ghara or tungi,* over the years became an integral part of the rural community life of Odisha as a multi-purpose village institution; school, hall and library, all combined into one. Jagannath Dasa's Bhagavata, by way of depicting the story of Krshna-Jagannath in colloquial Odia brought the glory and essence of their god to the easy comprehension of the masses, both literate and illiterate. As a result, at a popular level, it became a source of spiritual support and solace. For example, every Odia on his death-bed wishes to listen to lines from the Bhagavata.[10]

In later medieval and early modern Odia literature, Lord Jagganath was the 'Mahanayaka', being depicted as 'Patitapabana' or the savior of the downtrodden. The *Panchasakha* poets and after them, ornate poets such as Upendra Bhanja (late 17th century A.D.) described Lord Jagannath as 'Patitapabana', the god of the poor, the redeemer of the miserable, the wretched, the low-caste and the tribal. There were innumerable *Jananas, Bhajanas, Daskathias,* narrating the glory of Lord Jagganatha. Salabega in the early part of the 17th century, composed some of the most passionate *jananas* (devotional poems) of Oriya literature, pouring out his grievances and diatribes to Lord Jagannath on a very personal level. Salabega had a Muslim father and a Hindu mother, but the mother's

influence on him was so overwhelming that he became a devotee of Lord Jagannath, in spite of the acute social and cultural conservatism of the time. He invoked the Lord to crush his sorrows as 'a tusker tramples down a forest of lotuses'. Lord Jagganath was also revered in the prefaces of many epics and long narrative poems. To give a few examples, 'the *Anargha Raghavam* by Murari Misra of Orissa (8th century), *Gitagovindam* by Sri Jayadeva, *Candrakala Natika* by Mahapatra Visvanatha Kaviraj, *Abhinava Gitagovindam* and *Mukti Chintamani* by King Gajapati Purusottama Deva, *Jagannatha Vallabha Natakam* by Raya Ramananda, *Dvadasa Yatra Tatva* by Raghunandana, *Ganga Vamsanucharita Champu* by Vasudeva Ratha, the *Sthala Puranas* like *Vamana Samhita*, *Niladrimahodayam, Kapil Samhita, Kestra Mahatmyam, Madhuranirudha Natakam* by Cayani Candrasekhara or *Yatra Bhagavatam* by Balunki Pathi are the Sanskrit works on Lord Jagannath. Besides these Sanskrit works, the Odia works which glorify the cult of Jagannath are *Deulatola, Jagamohana Ramayana, Amarakosa Gita* and *Bataavakasa* by Balarama Dasa, *Jagannatha Charitmrta* by Divakar Dasa, *Dardhyata Bhakti* by Ramadasa, *Daru Brahma Gita* and Odia Bhagavata by Jagannatha Dasa, *Anakara Samhita* by Nanda Dasa, *Chayalisa Patala* by Acyutananda Dasa, *Caturdhmurti Varnana* by Krpashindhu Dasa, *Jagamohana Chanda* by Dinakrsna Dasa, *Ksetramahatmya* and *Rasika Haravati* by Upendra Bhanja and *Siddhanta Darpana* by Samanta Chandrasekhara.[11]

In the modern period also, the movement for the establishment of Odisha as a separate province on the basis of language as well as the nationalist movement against the Brititish rule drew inspiration and strength from Jagganath cult. Lord

Jagganath occupied a central position in the nationalist thought as the nationalist leaders looked back to medieval Odishan Empire for encouragement. This is amply reflected in the literary works of Satyabadi group of writers who created outstanding literature mainly focusing upon the Ganga and Suryavamsa periods of Odishan history. *Konarke* (1919), a kavya composed by Nilakantha Das, *Purusottama Deva* (1917), *Mukunda Deva* (1921), two plays and *Alekhika*, an anthology of ballads by Godavarish Misra are some of the prominent examples. Other writers like Gobinda Bidyadhara, Aswini Kumar Ghose, Mayadhar Mansingh, Kalicharan Pattanayak and Radhamohan Gadanayak also wrote plays, poems and ballads centering on Lord Jagganath.[12] The leaders, who advocated integrating the 'Odia' movement into the larger nationalist movement against foreign domination, could not ignore the immense influence of Lord Jagganath on Odia psyche. "Therefore, even after his conversion to the cause of Indian nationalism, Gopabandhu Das in his long poem Bandira Atmakatha, written when he was in jail in 1923-24, says:

If the world were a tank and India a lotus in it, then the filament of that lotus would be the holy Nilachala (Puri)"[13]

Gopabandhu, in this poem has appealed to the people of Odisha not to lose heart as Lord Jagganath as the 'leader' leading them in their battle for self-determination and identity:

"*Bisese Utkale nahi prayojana*
Utkalara neta nije Narayana"

He further says in the poem,

"Lord Jagganatha is still sitting in Nilachala
Then how can you claim that Utkala is orphaned?"[14]

In 1928, while addressing a public meeting at Cuttack Town Hall, Utkala Gourava Madhusudan Das, known as the 'grand old man of Odisha', recited a poem written on the spur of the moment, in which he pleaded to the millions Odias to recite 'Save us Lord Jagannath' in unison that would bring an end to the enveloping darkness and lead the path to progress and prosperity.

"Kotie Odia Gotie Swarare daka trahi Jagannatha
Andhara Ghunchiba nischaya dekhiba Jatira Unnati Patha"[15]

There are numerous examples of leaders, litterateurs, thinkers and philosophers invoking Lord Jagganath not merely as a Hindu god but as an integrative force; only who could keep the people motivated and united in the face of adversities and cultural onslaughts and mobilize them towards greater integration. As Prof. Patnaik points out, "Politically, the institution of Jagannath has been "a constant ritual bombardment" of the people of Orissa, "to provoke manifestation of unity." This political culture has been elastic and flexible, with a remarkably integrated ethos. Voluntary groups and mass media have, of late, fed this political culture fat. In a cumulative way it has led to a process of political socialisation."[16] Jagganath Dharma, thus, does not denote a narrow 'Hindu centric' discourse; rather it propagates an all embracing socio-cultural philosophy that calls for obliteration of all parochial distinctions and discriminations by binding the people of the world with the thread of love and humanity. In this sense, Lord Jagganath can be called 'the Real Icon' of the globalized world.

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Thoughts On
LORD JAGANNATH
AND HIS *NABAKALEBARA*

Dr. P. K. Mohapatra

That was a Thursday is mid-March. I and my wife decided to go to Puri and have a *darshan* of Shri Jagannath. After the *darshan* we bought *Mahaprasad* and sat down to have the *Mahaprasad* on the floor of Anand Bazar. Just when we had finished and I was about to take out the banana leaf, a young woman who looked to be of a good family – she was not certainly one of the so called baggers – asked us, "Have you finished eating?" When I said "Yes, but ....." she begged me to let her have the used banana leaf as it is, so that she could have the *Mahaprasad* along with her husband and child who were standing by her. When I hesitated a bit because that leaf contained our

left-over, she could read my mind and told me smilingly that there was nothing wrong with it and that God's *prasad* is best served and eaten in a leaf containing the left-overs by other devotees; that it is still better if it is done in the Ananda Bazar. Before my elitist rational mind could comprehend anything, I watched with awe and wonder the uncommon glee with which the little family sat down and poured the contents off the small burnt up mud container on our leftover banana leaf and started enjoying eating, I guess with a satisfaction and spiritual pleasure that was manifold compared to what *we* felt while having our divine meal on that same banana leaf.

This incident left an indelible impact on my psyche and will remain in my memory as long as I live – at least for the lesson it taught us on the greatness of Lord Jagannath and His unique philosophy of universalism and egalitarian humanism. All of us are the children of God and everyone is equal in the eyes of the Lord, irrespective of caste, creed, religion and class. Like in a huge joint family, all members of the human race- jointly and severally- are supposed to share the divine meal together without an iota of the divisive feeling of 'me' and 'him', 'we' and 'them', 'mine' and 'thine'. (this is reminiscent of the lofty Vedantic ideal of all being the same with the *Brahman* and so the same with each other). Eating together and even sharing the leftovers of each other indicates the invaluable love for each other as it happens in Indian joint families. It indicates the unique sense of belongingness and concern for each other. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam,* in the true sense of the terms. God's creation is a happy home where each member is tied to all others by that priceless bond of love and mutual concern.

'Vaikuntha samana aha ate sehi ghara,
paraspara sneha jahin thae nirantara'.

And this how the power of faith inevitably leads to unity and identity. If we believe in God then we believe Him to be the creator, and so we believe that all of us are the children of God; and there is no room here for difference and disharmony.

With this kind of lofty ideology and spiritual backdrop, it is no wonder that Shri Jagannath is a Lord with a sort of uniqueness unseen in the religious history of India, indeed of the world.

What should I say about Lord Jagannath ? Should I say that he is the Lord Vishnu of the Hindus? But he certainly is not confined to the complicacies of Hinduism! He, for sure, transcends the notorious hierarchy of Hindu social and religious practice – a pernicious practice of stratification and discrimination between men and men, which compelled many a revolution for reform – which compelled one of the gifted sons of India, Babasaheb Bhim Rao Ambedkar, to quit the religion of his birth and change to Buddhism. In sharp contrast, look at Jagannath culture. His *Mahaprasad* is shared by priests and scavengers alike. His car festival brings him out of his *santum sanctorium* on to the dusty roads in order to mingle with the devotees of all religions, all faiths and all ways of life. Dashia Bauri, an 'untouchable' low caste Hindu tops the list of prominent Jagannath *Bhaktas*. His image as the Buddha is fairly well documented. In fact his egalitarian humanism embraces devotees of all religions: Bhakta Salabeg is among his greatest devotees. Buddhists and Christians are all drawn towards him, especially on the annual occasion of the car festival. His worshipers are

not only Brahmin priests, but also very prominently the 'low cast' *Shabaras*, who are respected as the *daita paties* under the all embracing umbrella of Jagannathism.

Should I say that He is the Lord of the Buddhists for which a lot of arguments and evidences have been adduced ? But, certainly, besides the Jagannath trinity being speculated as the Buddhist *tri-ratnas-* **Buddha, Dharma and Snagha-** (Dharma in Buddhist texts represent a female), they are also familiarly seen as Krushna, Balaram and sister Subhadra of the *Vaishnava* tradition. The trinity is also viewed by some scholars as the Hindu trinity of Vishnu, Durga and Shiva. The attempt for a religious stamping thus continues to elude, and is bound to elude, given the multifarious descriptions and interpretations of this unique culture – the culture of Lord Jagannath.

Or, should I say that he is the Lord of Odisha and the Odias, for which strong arguments and evidences are not difficult to find ? If we go by legends and folklores, the Lord Himself chose the *Purusottama Kshetra* of Odisha as his place of abode and worship. Even prior to that, the Shabara chief of Odisha, Viswavasu, used to worship Him as *Nila Madhava* in the thick forests of interior Odisha. As on to-day the descendants of Viswavasu, famously known as *Daitapatis*, continue to play significant roles in His worshiping rituals as much as the Brahmin priests of Puri. And this is where the specialty of Jagannath worship stands out as typical and without a parallel in the religious history of India. There have been other Gods worshipped in different states and regions of India but none of them is so much essentially tied up with the religious and cultural life of that region as is the case with Jagannath and Odisha where, in

sharp contrast, this is a conspicuous exception. Odisha's *dharma* is Jagannath Dharma, Odisha's culture is Jagannath Culture, and even the history of Odisha is largely the history of Lord Jagannath (courtesy: Dr. Benimadhab Padhi, *Utkala Prasanga*, 1973). But despite all this, Lord Jagannath cannot be said to be the Lord of Odisha exclusively. He is the Lord of the Universe – **Jagannatha**.

However, amidst all the contradictions and confusions, the ideal of Jagannath - in *this* sense of being the Lord of the Universe – captures the fancy of millions of people all over India in particular and indeed of the whole world in general. In Jagannath cult we find a grand synthesis of all religions and all strands of faith and folk psychology. He is *Purusottama* or the Supreme Self of the *Upanishadas* and the *Bhagavat Gita*. He is seen as Bhairava of Tantric Advaita and he is also revered as *Patitapabana* as conceived in Mahajan Buddhism. Perhaps this last description makes him the most catholic of gods in the Hindu Pantheon – most egalitarian and most human. In terms of faith, worship and rituals, He is the God of all people – princes and peasants alike, Brahmins and *Chandas* alike, Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Buddhists and Jains alike. Most notably, the cult and culture of Lord Jagannath holds together "the noble democracy of Islam, the nobler humanism of Christianity and the universal love [*karuna*] of Buddhism", embodying thereby a revolutionary concept of socio religious egalitarianism (courtesy: Mayadhar Mansinha, the *Statesman*, Nov. 21, 1968).

Jagannath Dharma is not a religion in the conventional sense, not even within the Hindu fold, though it has an undying hold upon all Hindus. Yet within the Hindu fold it is a unique

culture of catholicism that embraces all sorts of Indian beliefs and almost all conceptions of Indian deities and rituals. Most notably, He is Lord Vishnu in whatever form and by whatever name He is called in Hindu religious texts and *shastras*. Again, be it the 'fetishism of aboriginal races' (The *Shabaras* of interior Odisha), or the nature worship of the Vedas or the lofty spiritualism of the great Indian reformers – all these rituals and beliefs have found refuse in the way of life i.e. Jagannathism (courtesy: *The Imperial Gazettter of India*). Here is the Lord which the Hindus take pride in and yet do not feel shy in identifying him with the Buddha as the ninth incarnation of Vishnu. And this is the Hindu God which the Buddhists don't hesitate to worship as *their* deity. Even the Jainas also worship *Purusottam* as their *Tirthankara*. Here is a Lord who, unlike other gods of the Hindus, is made up of wood; that is why He is called *Daru Devata*. And here is a lord who is worshiped together with not only brother Balabhadra but also with a female deity, sister Subhadra – a unique specialty because within the Hindu fold a god is usually worshiped along with his consort and not with a sister. It would be too farfetched to describe Subhadra as the consort of Lord Jagannath, though some such attempts have also been made by some to explain the worship of a female deity as a part of the Jagannath trinity. This makes our Lord not only unique but also inexplicable that belies all logic. ***"Achintya khalu je bhavah na tangstarkena chintayet".*** In the wonderful legend depicting the emergence of Lord Jagannath, not only a [holy] stone (the indestructible heart of Krishna Bhagaban that was thrown into the sea and later worshipped as *Nila Madhava*) is transformed into a [holy] timber but also, wonder of wonders, a unitary God was transformed into a trinity – sharing the soul

substance at the time of each *naba kalebara*. Thoughts and logic go on holiday when divinity and spiritual speculations have their sway. Laws of the heart outweigh the function of the mind and the brain, especially when it concerns the moving tale of the most intimate deity of the Odias.

However the uniquely unique specialty of Jagannathism lies in its expressed espousal of humanism. Man and his way of life are clearly reflected in the ways of the Lord. He is the leading headman of the entire human race. Indeed, He has been the virtual King of Odisha where the Gajapati kings have been only the representative *sevakas* of the Lord. He assumed human form to fight a war on behalf of his devotees. The story of Jagannath and Balabhadra riding their white and black horses and leading the Utkaliya Army in the Kanchi war in order to protect the honour of his humble devotee, Raja Purusottama Deva is a well known folklore in every Odia household. His annual **car festival** speaks of his love for all men for whom he comes out of His Grand Temple into the open streets of *Badadanda* in order to mingle with all men and redeem the fallen in his role of *Patitapabana.* And above all, like his human devotees, he assumes a new body or *Navakalevara* every 12-19 years. *Srimad Bhagabata* reminds us of the truth of life: anybody who is born in the world has to die:

Martya mandale dehabahi, Devata hele vi marai

He "died" once, when his devotee Jara Shabara inadvertently killed him in the *Dwapara Yuga*. He assumed the form of *Nila Madhava* thereafter and was worshipped by Jara's descendants, the *Shabaras* of Odisha. Then, after assuming the form of *Daru Devata,* the Lord continues to shed his old

body and takes to new body at regular intervals with the all the spiritual rites and celebrations analogous to the funeral rites of ordinary humans – thereby justifying his own words in the *Bhagabat Gita*:

Vasansi jimani yatha vihaya navani gruhnati naroparani/
Tatha sharirani vihaya jimanyanyani sanjati navani dehi//

Like the soul of lesser mortals surviving their physical death and soon thereafter migrating to a new body, the Supreme Soul in the form of Lord's *Nabhi Brahma* is made to migrate into the *Nava Kalebara*. [It is said that this **Soul Substance** is divided four-fold and is made to migrate into the new bodies of the Jagannath trinity and Sree Sudarshana]. As in the case of the funeral rites of humans, the old bodies are cremated underground in the *Koili Baikuntha* behind the premises of the *Sree Mandira*, and new bodies made up of chosen Neem wood are then seated on the *Ratana Vedi*, the *sanctum sanatorium*, with profound rituals celebrated with elaborate devotional rites.

This wonderful concept of *Naba Kalebara* makes Jagannath cult not only anthropomorphic but also humanistic, very much man-like, – making man and his life the model of the life of the Lord. It is one of the reasons for which Lord Jagannath is adorned as *gana devata* – the Lord of the people who loves to live among his dear human folks, thus giving vent to His moving wish:

Naham tisthami vaikunthe, yoginam hrudaye na cha /
Madbhaktah yatra gayanti, tatra tisthami, Narada ! //

With this kind of expressed love for the man kind and so much of egoless concern for His dear *bhaktas*, the cult and

culture of Lord Jagannath is bound to transform all forms of rationalism and agnosticism, even atheism, into total selfless surrender. No wonder that the overwhelmed Raja Indradyumna begged the Lord to make him childless so that there would be no one after him to claim any kind of ownership of the Lord and His *Sree Mandira*. An exemplary case of selfless love for the Lord and egoless obeisance to Him ! A paradigm case of *niskama karma* indeed ! If there is any truth in the saying that God created man after His image, this is particularly evident in the case of Indradyumna, the greatest devotee of Lord Jagannath and a model of good human beings created truly in the image of God. We have also just seen, though, the other side of the coin – the wish of God to live the life in the image of man. Perhaps for an agnostic like me this is a great message of Jagannath culture, especially to be learnt from the wonderful concept of *naba kalebara*.

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NAVAKALEVARA REVISITED

Dr. Kailash Chandra Dash

I

Navakalevara or the ceremony of the periodical renewal of the wooden images in the Jagannatha temple, a ceremony as stated by a famous authority on it, which is unique in many respects in the Hindu religious space[1]. As recently presented by Ronald Hardenberg, the ceremony is characterized by a sequence of rituals lasting upto several months[2]. During these months the four images of the temple of Jagannatha are reconstructed during the occurrence of a double Asadha(June-July), i.e., within a time span of nearly 19 years, sometimes even after 12 years[3]. The extra Asadha is an additional month which is added to the lunar calendar of the Hindus after every 32 months and 16 days in order to make up for the deficiency

of a lunar month(29.5 days) against a solar month(30.44 days),i.e., of 0.9 day every month[4]. Three important priests like Daita, Pati Mahapatra and Suddha Suara play a significant role in this unique phase. The Daitas in Odisha are believed to be an aboriginal people living in the forest(most probably a branch of the Sabaras) who take charge of the deties during the period of Anasara, also arrange the car festival and also play a very important role in the ceremony of Navakalevara[5]. They are believed to be the descendants of Sabara Visvavasu. Pati Mahapatra was connected with Sabara Visvavasu and Brahmin Vidyapati according to the famous Indradyumna tradition and has also a significant role in this occasion[6]. The third category of sevakas are the Suddha Suaras who like the Daitas are the Hinduized descendants of some of the original Sudha priests of the pre-Hinduized lord Jagannatha who got hinduized through their close association with the deity[7]. Thus with these non-Brahmin priests in collaboration with the Brahmin priests play a very significant role in the Navakalevara ceremony in the Puri temple. In this paper we like to revisit the ceremony on the basis of an interpretation of the traditional texts and chronicles in Puri as well as the archival documents.

II

Although the Navakalevara as an important ceremony in the Puri temple has not been stated in the texts of the Ganga-Suryavamshi Gajapati phase the ceremony was then known to have been overshadowed in the Gundicha yatra[8]. Even we donot find the term in the chronicles of Jagannatha Puri in the pre-colonial phase[9]. In Upendra Bhanja's Koti Brahmanda Sundari the statement-*Snana-Gundicha Svayam Beni Lila Yara/*

Patitapavana Arthe Prasadu bahara he- reminds that the term Navakalevara was shrouded in Snana-Gundicha occasion and was not properly used in pre-colonial phase[10]. On the other hand the term is very popular in the colonial phase from 1805 A.D.[11] Navakalevara was a periodical occasion of the famous Gundicha Yatra in the medieval phase. There has been considerable debate on the term Gundicha which was known to have been used in Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya of Skanda Purana and Sarala Mahabharata[12]. We have accepted the term as associated with the centre of worship of a tribal deity(Khambha or Pillar) and if the so-called Indradyumna tradition on the origin of the wooden god of Puri is interpreted properly Gundicha would be an earlier site of a tribal deity before a centre of Vishnu Purushottama appeared near it as it was connected with ocean. There are several explanations for this unique existence of Gundicha site before a shine of Vishnu Purushottama was constructed near it;

1. The visit of the wooden deities every year in Asadha is connected with Gundicha Kshetra.

2. The tribal priests like Daitas, Patis and Suddha Suaras are closely connected with this occasion.

3. In Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya Gundicha ia described as Adiptha or the fatherland of the Hinduized deities-jagannatha and his associates.

4. In the medieval phase Gundicha Yatra was well known after 13th century A.D. in India just like the Jyesthi occasion in Purushottama was well known in India in 10th-12th century A.D.[13].

Thus although the famous periodical renewal of the wooden deities in Puri was well known in the Ganga period at least from the 13th century A.D. the term Gundicha overshadowed the ceremony and Navakalevara was inside it as a significant occasion.

We have no definite information on the exact time of the introduction of the wooden character of the deity Sri Purushottama in the 10th-12th century A.D. in Puri except the Puri chronicles. From a study of the *Chaturddhamurtti* in place of Sri Purushottama during the period of Anangabhima III in the first two decades of the 13th century A.D. it becomes very clear that the wooden image worship was not known in the Purushottama Kshetra in the pre-Ganga period[14]. In the *Anargha Raghava Nataka* of Murari Mishra(which was probably composed in the pre-Ganga phase) the deity is expressed as Nilendramani(indicative of its stone nature)[15]. The large number of votive inscriptions of the period of Chodaganga in the Narasimha shrine donot definitely indicate the wooden nature of the deity Sri Purushottama[16]. In the famous Indradyumna tradition(as incorporated in the *Purushottama Mahatmya* of Skanda Purana and in *Sarala Mahabharata*) the image worshipped as Nilamadhava before Indradyumna saw the Kshetra is presented as made of stone(*Pasana Pratima).* According to Indradyumna tradition the old image of Nilamadhava(stone in nature)) was replaced by the *Chaturddhamurtti*(fourfold Daru images) only in the period of Indradyumna[17]. Hence the worship of wooden gods in Puri during the period of Yayati Keshari in the traditional texts like *Rajabhoga Itihasa*, *Deshakhanja* and Gopala Tirtha math Madalapanji was a mere construction of the Karan writers who intended to reestablish the antiquity of the

wooden god worship in the Purushottama Kshetra from very ancient time to the period of historical Yayati on the basis of the prevalent Indradyumna tradition. These texts were compiled in a tense atmosphere of Mughal-Afghan conflict in Odisha in the 17th century A.D. and the purpose was to reconstruct the history of the worship of the wooden god Jagannatha which was disrupted by the invasion of Afghan general Kalapahad in A.D. 1568.

Thus the ceremony of Navakalevara was closely connected with the Ganga phase at least from 13th century A.D. when the famous Jagannatha triad was worshipped in the Purushottama Kshetra. In the epigraphic records of the Ganga kings starting from the phase of Anangabhima III there is no reference to any provision of the system of Navakalevara during that time. Only in the Purushottma Kshetra Mahatmya as well as in Sarala Mahabharata the Indradyumna tradition contains this process to some extent; but they are not sufficient to provide an outline. However there is an indirect reference in the Odia Mahabharata of Sarala Das(15th century A.D.) on a particular ritual connected with Navakalevara[18]. It refers to the fact that Brahmin Vasu was blindfolded by Savara Jara to see the secret seat of Nilamadhava which reminds us of a ritual of the removal of the sacred substance from the old body to the new one by the Daita(a tribal priest of Jagannatha) who is blindfolded in the Navakalevara occasion[19]. This indicates that the rituals connected with Navakalevara of the present time were known in the Puri temple in the Ganga- Suryavamshi phase in some form and Sarala Das presented it in this concealed manner.

III

It is an interesting point to note that two works which are presently in use with the priests of the Jagannatha temple for the performance of the ceremony are called *Vanayagavidhi* (the procedure of the forest sacrifice) and the Chalasrimurttipratisthaviddhi (the procedure of the consecration of the holy movable images)[19]. The first work is a part of *Pratisthapradipa* by Narasimha Vajapeyi who probably belonged to the period of Telenga Mukunda Deva[20]. G.C. Tripathy accepted this text as independent one and is not a part of *Pratisthapradipa*[21] . He also stated that both the *Vanayagaviddhi* as well as *Chalasrimurttipratisthaviddhi* were composed by some local priests on the basis of their own practical experience and knowledge for the sake of the posterity and probably also for their own personal use since Navakalevara is a ceremony which takes place at such intervals that one is likely to forget much of the ritual by the next time[22]. There is at present an important text under our consideration which provide the outline of the ceremonial details and it was well known in Puri in the 18th century A.D[23]. It is a type of manuscript of the category of Rajabhoga which was collected by the Orissa Research Project in the 1970s from the Deula Karana of the temple of Jagannatha[24]. Both G.C. Tripathy and later on G.N.Dash have accepted this text as an authoritative evidence on the Navakalevara ritual in the Puri temple[25]. The text is also copied in some form in another manuscript called Gopala Tirtha Math Madalapanji or *Sri Purushottama Kshetra Sri Jagannatha Devankara Darubrahma Murati Avatara* which was also procured by the Orissa Research Project in the 1970s[26]. In the first text now called Deshkhanja there is description of Vanayaga and it

was based on the method of Vidyakara Vajapeyi of the family of Sambhukara[27]. Both Sambhukara and later on Vidyakara were the famous Smruti writers of Odisha in the 14th century A.D.[28]. This reference in the Deshakhanja manuscript indicates that there were some written legitimate texts in Sanskrit in Odisha in the 14th 15th century A.D. on the Navakalevara rituals which were appreciated even in the 18th century Odisha as we find this reference in the Deshakhanja manuscript. Such texts were necessary for the priest at least after half a century of the first introduction of the wooden god worship in the Puri temple in the period of Anangabhima III(of the first two decades of the 13th century A.D.). From the elaborate description of Vanayaga for the event of Sri Purushottama Sri Jagannatha Deva's Darubrahma Srimurtti as well as Pratima Pratistha Viddhi as recorded in Deshakhanja and repeated in brief form in Gopala Tritha Math Madalapanji it is clear that by the Maratha phase in Odisha there was a successful attempt to establish the Navakalevara vidhi on the basis of the textual support of a Smruti writer of the medieval phase who was Vidyakara Vajapeyi of the family of Sambhukara. The description Sambhukara Vamshe Vidyakara Vajapeyi suggests that the method of Vidyakara Vajapeyi was only followed and the name of Sambhukara was associated in it for introducing Vidyakara only. So we can state here that the method of Vanayaga and Darumurtti Pratistha viddhi of Vidyakara Vajapeyi was actually popular in Odisha in the pre-Kalapahad phase before A.D. 1568 and that it was also appreciated in Puri in the 17th 18th century A.D when Navakalevara rituals were freshly needed to be compiled and authenticated for establishing the antiquity of Jagannatha Puri. In the texts some secrets on the reconstruction of the wooden images have been covered up and

the details though elaborate appear to be superfluous. The connection of goddess Mangala in the search of daru as we find today very important is not stated in the texts. Also the transfer of the life substance(Brahma Padartha) from the old case to the new one has not been stated in these texts. In one sense these texts only present the Brahmanical mode and keep concealed the original tribal and Tantric processes. The iconography also reflects purely a Brahmanical idea and though the association of Sabara Visvavasu is only stated it suppresses the true secret of the renewal of the image.

IV

In the confusing phase of Mughal-Afghan conflict in Odisha the process of Nabakalevara might have been disrupted as the centre of Jagannatha, the altar of power was not stable then. It was only in the Maratha phase there was a change of the situation and the administration under the Marathas was favourable for the festive occasions in Puri. After the Marathas though Khurda as a political centre began to decline the colonial authority had taken considerable care in making Puri a centre of pilgrimage and so the festive occasions were very prominent then. The English officers starting from Charles Groeme, A.Stirling, William Hunter and others became enthusiastic on the rituals of the Jagannatha temple. The term Navakalevara came under their notice during this phase. From the reports of the colonial officers it is very clear that a Navakalevara had taken place in 1853 which was attended with an accident resulting in the death of several persons[29]. The next Navakalevara was in the 18th anka of Raja Divyasimha Deva[30]. It was expected in 1893 that there would be a Navakalevara; but as the Raja was

then a minor, his grand-mother , guardian and Mahafiz, Rani Suryamani Patmahadei preferred a *Sriangaphita* on the basis of a popular prediction that on the occasion of a kalevara, the carpenter, a Brahmin priest and one of the Raja's family household must die within a year of the celeberation[31]. There was great reaction in Puri on behalf of Rasbihari Patnaik, Assistant Secretary of Jagannatha Sanatana Dharmarakshini Sabha from April 1893 because it was expected that the Navakalevara would take place in 1893 after an interval of 20 years[32] But the Sabha was unhappy at the discretion of the Regent Rani[33] There were about two lakhs of pilgrims for that occasion in Puri in 1893.

According to a colonial report the Kalevara was not popular with the Raja, as it entailed a very large outlay of money[34]. The Daitas and the Daita-patis were to be supplied with funds during their journey through the Garjat in quest of the sacred neem logs. The logs were to be brought and carried to Puri. Many Brahmins were to be entertained for the performance of the necessary yajnas and mounds of ghee were to be burnt in ceremonial sacrifice. The Brahmins, Daita-pati, the Daitas and the carpenters were all to be rewarded with presents of clothes. Hence in the declining phase of Khurda Gajapatis in their kingless kingdom Kalevara became expensive and was sometimes overlooked. After this Sriangaphita in 1893 there was no Navakalevara between 1874 to 1912. In 1902 the colonial authorities became curious to know about this occasion because it was not performed for so long a time between 1874 to 1902. It thus came to be regarded as mysterious and the police authorities of India regarded it with gravest suspicion. Confidential enquiries were made from the central provinces and

other districts in 1893 and 1901 to know what the mysterious word was meant. Their report was as follows:It is one of the festivals depending on certain astronomical conditions. It takes the name from the fact that on the occasion of its celebration the neem-wood bodies of Lord Jagannatha, Subhadra and Balabhadra are renewed entirely. If the festival depends on astronomical phenomena, this would account for the intervals at which it is celeberated. If the festival falls at an interval of one Yuga(12 years) or more, the bodies are entirely renewed and the old ones buried in great secrecy; but if the festival occurs more often than once in 12 years only a partial renovation is necessary[35].The Famous Navakalevara came in 1912 after an interval of 39 years[36]. This Navakalevara was very successfully conducted from 9th June to 13th June when the new images were made in utmost secrecy.

Thus in spite of the inroads of the Mughals, Marathas and finally the British, Puri had maintained the position as a cultural centre in the past. As the poet stated; "The East bowed low before the blast in patient deep disdain, She saw the legions thunder-past, Then plunged in thought again".The holy town of Puri , the ancient tabernacle where Lord Jagannatha reigns supreme with his Navakalevara and Gundicha Yatra surrounded by his myriads of devotees, is always venerated as the most sacred land of India.The original Jyesthi occasion of his predecessor Sri Purushottama in course of time in the Ganga phase expanded and covered the month of Asadha to adjust Gundicha and sometimes Navakalevara occasion for which the centre became famous as a universal pilgrim centre.

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2. Hardenberg, 2011, p.1.
3. *Ibid.*
4. Tripathy, 1978/2014, p.300.
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6. *Ibid.*
7. G.N.Dash, *Hindus and Tribals-Quest for Co-existence, Social Dynamics in Medieval Orissa*, Decent Books, Delhi, 1998, p.43-70.
8. In the Purushottama Kshetra Mahatmya of Skanda Purana, a work of the Ganga phase there is a reference to Gundicha Yatra. We do not find this term Navakalevara in the Puranic sources of the medieval phase. See Kailash Chandra Dash, "Navakalevara and Ratha Yatra in the Purushottama Kshetra", *Orissa Review*, July, 1996, Vol.LII, No.12, p.28.
9. The term is absent in the Rajabhoga Itihasa of A.B.Mohanty, Deshakhanja and Gopala Tirtha Matha

Madalapanji. In Rajabhoga the term is *Tarapha* and in another section it is *Lepa*. In Deshakhanja the term is *Talapa* which may also mean decoration(lepa) or remaking. See *Madalapanji* , ed. A. B. Mohanty, 1969, p.5, p.28. G.N.Dash, R.R. Das, ed., *Jagannatha and the Gajapati Kings of Orissa, A Compendium of late Medieval Texts(Rajabhoga, Sevakarmani, Deshakhanja and Other Minor Texts),* Manohar, Delhi, 2010, p.10, 17. A paper Manuscript entitled *Sri Purushottama Kshetra Sri Jagannathankara Darubrahma Murati Avatara* of Gopala Tirtha Matha also does not refer to this term. I am grateful to Professor G.N.Dash for giving me an opportunity of reading this manuscript. It is included in Orissa Research Project. See Manuscript No.20.

10. Kailash Chandra Dash, "*Ratha Yatra*", *Sri Mandira*, Puri, Vol.XXIII, 1994, p.12.

11. This term Navakalevara is found in the reports of the colonial officers and also in Odia news weekly like Utkala Dipika in the 19th century A.D.

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17. For Indradyumna tradition and worship of stone image in the pre-Indradyumna phase see Vana Parva of Sarala Mahabharata, Part-2, Department of Cultural Affairs, Bhubaneswar, 1970, p.185.

18. *Ibid.*

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20. Tripathy, 1978/2014, p.302-303.

21. *Ibid.*

22. *Ibid.*, p.303.

23. *Ibid.*, p.302-303. G.N.Dash, R.R. Das, *op.cit.*, 2010, 131-139.

24. *Ibid.*

25. *Ibid.*

26. The Gopala Tritha Math Madalapanji also contains an account of this renewal of the wooden images in the Puri temple. For this reference see No.9.

27. See Tripathy, 1978/2014, 302-304. Dash and Das, 2010, p.131.

28. *Ibid.*

29. Government of Bengal, 1903(Judicial Department), Board of Revenue Files, Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, File No. 3-P-31-34 of 1902, p.53.

30. *Ibid.*

31. *Ibid.*

32. *Utkala Dipika*, 29th April, 1893.

33. *Ibid.*

34. *Government of Bengal(JudicialDepartment)*, 1903, Board of Revenue Files, OSA, Bhubaneswar, p.53.

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SRI JAGANNATH : THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE

Ranjan Pradhan

Sri Jagannath is not the Lord of Odishan people only; he belongs to the whole world, the whole universe. He is the Lord of over as the prime center of many spiritual movements for ages. He is the Lord of world-peace, world fraternity and the Lord of equality. He is the supreme savior of those who are fallen. Because he is the Lord of the world. He is adored as Sri Jagannath. So, the adorer invokes Him – 'O Lord Jagannath! You be the redeemer, the deliverer of my life's journey.' *(Jagannatha swami nayana pathah gami bhabatu meh.)*

With Lord Jagannath, the Indian culture and Indian minds have been greatly enriched. The Jagannath tradition, since early

days, has spread the words of fraternity, love and unity in length and breadth of India. It's due to Lord Jagannath that Indian culture has found its high place of reverence. This seat of the Lord has earned its eminence world saints, monks and preachers have traveled *Srikshetra,* the holy place of Lord Jagannath, to confirm their religious authority. Despite so many sects and sub-sects of religious movements in India, every such group has liberally accepted the cult of Sri Jagannath as its own. Thus Lord Jagannath has turned to be the Lord of adoration of every human individual in the world. For the tribal people he is the *Sabara deity*. He is also the Lord of Salabega, the Yavan poet. He is the adored Lord of his poor devotee Dasia Bauri.

Though, the origin and evolution of Jagannath worship, as well as iconography, is unclear and has been subject to intense academic debate. In fact, the essentials of Arya, Dravida, Brahmin, Chandal, Hindu, Sikh, Buddha, Jain, Vaishnava, Saiba, Shakta (Tantra), Saura, Ganapatya, Christian, Islam and such other religions are found to be reflected in the Jagannath cult. Hence, Sri Jagannath is not the epitome of any religion; but a consciousness which sends the message of peace, fraternity and goodwill to the whole of world. The banner of the Patitapavan and having prasad among all, irrespective of different identities, are the bright signs of equality in our society. There is never any dearth of debate and dispute with the concept of Lord Jagannath; but his glory still continues to pervade the world. He has been glorified ever more.

Sri Jagannath: the tribal god and the wood worship

Wood worship is one of the oldest characteristics of tribal culture. As tribal people generally inhabit in hills and forests,

wood and woods influence their lives most. Therefore they show much respect to trees.

In ancient times, tribal people used to worship a particular tree as their deity; but when they had to migrate to places in search of food, it was not possible to take out and carry that tree of worship with them. So gradually tree-worship takes the form of wood-worship. Symbolic of the tree-deity, they begin to worship a wood piece of it. Then they cut tree trunks, make pillar like wooden images out of them and worship. Today also there's testimony of such wood pillars being worshiped by the tribal people in undivided districts of Koraput, Mayurbhanj and Kendujhar. The sand festival observed by tribal people of Koraput region is a glaring example of wood-worship and *nabakalebara* tradition. The tribals of Koraput are used to worship a large pillar of wood in the sand festival that is called *Bali Yatra*. Carved out of a wood-trunk, some portion of the pillar is duly interred in the ground and *Pancha Dhatu* or five metals of gold, silver, iron, lead, copper etc are offered and placed at the root of it before burying. Interestingly, the wood-pillar, worshipped in sand festival, undergoes a renewal process *(Nabakalebara)* after every twelve years. In some cases, such Nabakalebar of tribal god *(Bali Debata)* is undertaken after a gap of three or six years also. The Nabakalebara ritual of Lord Jagannath is the ceremony of periodical renewal of the body of the deity, is a tribal custom. Such practices of renewal of wooden deity are found among the primitive tribes like Savaras, Paroja and Konds of Koraput region of Odisha.

The tribals of Koraput region during the festival, perform *Ankuraropan*, another rite in which they take five kinds of crop

grains *(Pancha Sasya)* for seeding. This is also typical a ritual followed during *Banayaga Yatra* (wood sacrifice festival) of Sri Jagannath's Nabakalebara. There are many resemblance between the tribal wood worship and Sri Jagannath culture.

Originally, Lord Jagannath was being worshipped as the *Sabari Narayan*, when his existence was being conceived in a tree. Pandit Nilakantha Das points that Savari Narayana of Madhya Pradesh (Dakshina Kosala), was brought to Puri from Phuljheur of Madhya Pradesh where a wooden deity was worshipped. This Narayana of the Savaras and became Jagannath. This gives us the idea about the prevalence of tree worships among primitive people. Verrier Elwin, anthropologist, ethnologist and tribal activist, in his book Religion of an Indian Tribe has narrated that, the god Jagannath had appeared in Sabari-Narayana in ancient Odisha. As per Elwin there is an alternative Savara legend, according to which there are three most important and prominent Kittungs (Gods) - two brothers and a sister, Ramma, Bimma and Sitaboi. Ramma is always coupled with the brother Bimma. The legend maintains that it was from them that the Savara tribe was born. Such a set up has significant resemblance to the Jagannath triad.

As Dr. Benimadhaba Padhi points out, the word 'Jagannath' doesn't originate from either Sanskrit or Pali. This is a Sanskrit version of the term *'Jaganta'* used in Sabar (Munda) dialect. The meaning of the word *'Jaganta'* is 'Lord of the world'. *'Kitung'* in Sabara or Saura language is God. Sabars believe that Kitung has ten kinds of forms and they are ten brothers – Jaganta, Toda, Tumana, Bhima, Bongrong, Garshida, Raman, Yojepala, Matta and Chitti. Sabaras draw pictures of the ten

forms and worship them during festivals. So we can say the concept of Dasabatara or ten incarnations at Puri Sri Mandir or the great temple is only derived from or developed out of the concept of Sabaras' ten forms of Kitung. Sabaras worship a deity, which is built out of a tree, in the name of Kitung. The image of this wood-built god is painted with red, white and yellow colours. This is also the practice in case of the trios of Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra. Of course, at some places, Subhadra is painted red instead of yellow perhaps, as some researchers say, due to the impact of Tantra. Like the *chhatri* of Lord Jagannath, an umbrella, made of flax, also hangs over the image of tribals' Kitung. As the meaning of Kitung, like Jagannath, is 'Lord of the world' so the deity Kitung, worshipped by Sabaras, is none but Jagannath only. Sabaras worship a tree in the form of Jagant; but they, out of reverence, also invoke their famous God in the name of *'Jagaboi'* which means God Jaga or Lord Jaga. And, we also many a time call Sri Jagannath as Jaga Thakur out of devotion. The structure and shape of Jagannath deity is commensurate with a pillar. The Savaras (tribals) were tree worshipers, and their rituals involved dancing and singing before the Kitung or Jaganata or God.

According to the description of Skanda Puran's Utkalakhand, Sri Jagannath was initially worshipped as Neelamadhaba by the Sabar Viswabasu. Viswabasu was Jara Sabar during Dwapar age. But he was Angad, the son of Banar King Bali and the devotee of Sri Rama, during the age of Treta. With Sri Rama's blessings he, to take revenge of his father's assassination, takes birth as Jara Sabar during the age of Dwapar and kills Sri Krishna the subsequent incarnation of Sri Rama. The half burnt body of Sri Krishna, in the form of a wood

piece (Daru), comes floating across the sea and then the image of Sri Jagannath is carved out of the Daru. But long before this He, in the form of Neelamadhab, was being worshipped by Viswabasu, the Sabar King. The inhabitants of northern Malab, under the leadership of Indradyumna, came to Odisha and influenced the tradition of Jagannath by Vaishnab cult. This resulted in the extinction of the tribal people's Neelamadhab tradition otherwise giving rise to the new cult of Sri Jagannath.

It has been argued that when the Vedic Aryans migrated to Odisha, they adopted the local tribal tradition of Jagannath worship, and effected the transformation of the tribal wooden pillar Jaganata to aryanized Jagannath. There is no caste distinction in the cult of Jagannath which is akin to the practices of tribals

A deep association of a class of non-Brahmin, tribal origin servitors, called *Daitaa,* exists with the worship of the Jagannath deities. These Daitaas are the hereditary servitors of Jagannath. They are inextricably and exclusively connected with the funeral rites of Jagannath during the Nabakalebara (New embodiment/renewal) ritual and bear the sole responsibilities of Snana Yatra and Ratha-Yatra. The instances of worship of Jagannath by Savaras (tribals) is also mentioned in 'Darubrahma Gita' written by Jagannath Das in the 16th century and in 'Deula Tola' written by Nilambara Das in the 17th century. All the above facts and arguments point to a possible tribal origin of the Jagannath worship.

Sri Jagannath as the deity of Jains

Like Sabar (tribal) tradition, the role played by Jain culture in birth and growth of Jagannath consciousness is also

quite significant. Many historians and researchers put Sri Jagannath as the deity of Jain religion. The deep association of ancient Kalinga with the Jain religion is an undeniable actuality. The founder of Jain religion Adinatha (Aadijeena) 'Rishabh Dev' was possibly the worshipping deity of ancient Kalinga. The temple of Rishabhnath and stone inscriptions of *Hatigumpha* (elephant cave) in Khandagiri reveal that *Aadijeena* was being worshipped in Kalinga. As conveyed by the stone inscriptions, Kharabela had yet again brought *'Jeenasana'*, which was stolen by Nanda King of Magadha, to Odisha. That the Jeenasana described in stone inscriptions is the Aadijeena of Kalinga is a fact without dispute. The image of Adijeena is known to be worshipped in Kalinga's *Pithunda* city which is compared with the present day Puri. The Jeenasana and the Adijeena are considered to be the divine seat of Sri Jagannath and Sri Jagannath himself respectively. As Jagannath is the supreme lord of the divine seat 'Jeenasana', hence he is popularly known as 'Jeena Nath'. And it is said that, the word 'Jagannath' has been gradually formed from 'Jeena Nath'.

Sri Jagannath is generally understood as the Lord of the Universe. However, he, in Jain institutions, is understood not as Lord of the Universe but as *Jagatnath*. The word *'Jagat'* denotes to the proper name and 'nath' depicts its title. So, like Rishabhnath, Shantinath, Neminath and other Jain scavingers (Teerthankaras) Jagatnath is also one of the Jain Tirthankaras. Researchers claim that in due course of time the word Jagannath has taken birth from the word Jagatnath. Great resemblance is perceived between the prevalent car festival of Sri Jagannath and that of Jains. The second day of the bright fortnight in the month of *Ashadha* (month of rain), the day of *Sri Gundicha Yatra*,

is the *Garbhakalyan day* (a Jain ritual) of the first Jain Tirthankar Rishabhnath. Jain people believe that this day Rishabhnath was conceived in the mother's womb. So for them this is a very sacred day. Rath Yatra of Rishabhnath, just as that of Sri Jagannath in Puri, is being observed on this day. Similarly Jain images do also have the practice of *Snana Yatra* (bathing festival) like that of Sri Jagannath. Researchers indicate that the famed *Kalpabriksha* (wish-tree) of Jagannath cult is no other than the Kalpabriksha of Jains and the famous *Ratnavedi* (the divine seat) of Lord Jagannath is also no other than the *Jeenasana* of Jains, brought back by Kharabela.

The trinity of Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and goddess Subhadra can be compared with the 'Jain Triratna' (complete seeing, complete knowing and complete character) of Jain philosophy. The *'Baaisi Pahacha'* (twenty two steps) of the grand temple are said to be the twenty two Jain Tirthankaras. The Prasad of Sri Jagannath is known as *'kaibalya'* in Upanishad and Vedic philosophy. The term kaibalya has been derived from the Jain word *'kebali'*. Puranic Galamadhab and King Indradyumna are compared with Kharabela of historic periods. Moreover, Madalapanji describes about a fight between Sabaras (tribals) and Jains relating to the worship of Jagannath and Rishabhnath. 'Wheel' is an important word in Jain religion. This has caused, it's said, to the creation of Puri Temple's Neelachakra. There exists a Jain shrine at Anandapur in the name of 'Chakratirtha'. All these facts and findings put Sri Jagannath forward to believe as a Jain deity. Also Pandit Nilakantha Das suggested that Jagannath was a deity of Jain origin because of the appending of Nath to many Jain Tirthankars. He felt Jagannath meant the 'World personified' in

the Jain context and was derived from *Jinanath*.

Sri Jagannath, the Buddhist god

In the culture and literature of Odisha Sri Jagannath is described as Buddha who is depicted as an incarnation of the former. The pictures of Dasabatara at the main gate's upper part of the Puri Jagannath temple portray Sri Jagannath in place of Buddha, the ninth incarnation or avatar. So, Buddha is Jagannath. Researchers say that Jagannath, Subhadra and Balabhadra have originated from the three prime symbols of *'Bauddha Triratna' – Buddha, Dharma and Sangha.* Sudarshan, who is also worshipped in Jagannath temple, is compared with the Bauddha Dharma Chakra of Bauddha religion. Among the Triratna, Buddha is the chief one. 'Dharma' in Bauddha religion is perceived in femininity, and mutual relationship of brothers and sisters is maintained in 'Sangha'. So 'Buddha' may be suggested to Jagannath, 'Dharma' to Subhadra and 'Sangha' to Balabhadra. Sabaras had accepted the religion of Buddha during Ashok's reign. The symbols of Triratna were kept inside a Buddhist Stupa which was also built in Puri at that time. The Stupa was the prime place of worship for Buddhist Sabaras.

After King Ashoka'a conquest of Kalinga, during spread of Buddhist religion in Kalinga, in third century B.C., first the worship of elephant and then at later period the worship of Chakra had been introduced as the symbols of Buddha. Elephant and wheel are two important subjects of Buddhist worship. This is why Sri Jagannath is adorned in the image of an elephant during Snana Purnami, and hence the four figures of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan hold due significance. The present day Sudarshan bears the importance of Buddhist

Dharmachakra of the past.

Rath-Yatra and Snana-Yatra find their due place in the religion of Buddha. The two Yatras are also two important festivals of Lord Jagannath. This is, as said, due to the influences of Buddhist religion. The two prevalent Yatras of Sri Jagannath are similarly important parts of Buddhist worship. Rath Yatra is carried out to celebrate the birth of Buddha. It is supposed that a Mahajnanee Bauddha Shrine existed in the past where the Temple of Jagannath exists now. Usually, Nabakalebara of Sri Jagannath is done at every twelve years. Old images are discarded by putting in new images in place of old ones. Then some cloth covered mysterious element is taken out of the old images and placed inside the new images. That mysterious component is supposed to be either the left side tooth or some relics of Gautama Buddha. The form of Sri Jagannath statue resembles no other Hindu deities; but it appears like the skull of Buddha.

Some people say that the *Brahmabastu* (Divine Life material) of Sri Jagannath is Buddhadanta (teeth of Buddha) and Puri is the ancient Dantapuri. According to the records of history, Buddha's teeth and relics in Kalinga had been handed over to the emperor of China during 6th century A.D. This points out about Kalinga having, someday, a number of Buddha's teeth and relics in its possession. No follower of Buddha could have parted with any special part of such precious relics to a foreign country without keeping it for oneself. So, there was at that time a religious relation among China, Srilanka and Kalinga. It is by verifying found out that the old records of Sri Jagannath Temple servitors do have mention of Chiau (China) servitors and

Lenka (Lanka/Srilanka) servitors in them. Though Lenkas are found being engaged in performing the Lord's service and worship, Chiau servitors are not seen in the Temple today. It is evident from these titles or surnames that people from China and Srilanka were once engaged in the Lord's service at this godly place. People with surnames of 'Chiau' and 'Chyau' (Chyau Patnaik, Chaini) are still found in Odisha today. This indicates about the religious relationship that was between ancient Kalinga and China. From all this it is understood that at one time Buddha's relics were in Puri which was also a well-known Buddhist place of pilgrimage. This is why the holy place was drawing near it the Buddhist pilgrims from Srilanka and China.

According some noted writers like W. W. Hunter, A. Stirling, John Beames, N. K. Sahu in the book A History of Orissa, Harekrushna Mahatab in his History of Orissa, and Mayadhar Mansingh in his 'The Saga of the Land of Jagannatha', that the Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra are compared as the Buddhist triad.

In fact, there is no historical evidence of worship of Jagannath at Puri prior to the 10th century, when Jajati Kesari was the ruler. The Buddhist King Indrabhuti's *'Jnanasiddhi'* mentions about the place of Jagannath. Nilakantha Das has mentioned that the Savaras were worshipping the image of Jagannath made of neem wood in a place called Sambal (Samal, now in Talcher of Angul District) in Oddiyana, the kingdom of Indrabhuti, which was even prior to the rule of Jajati Kesari-I. Indrabhuti has described Jagannath as Buddhist deity in *Jnanasiddhi.* In the narrative by Indrabhuti, Jagannath was worshipped by the Savaras in one of the Budha Viharas. During

the rule of King Sasanka and feudatory chief Madhav Raj-II, many anti-Buddhist campaigns were undertaken. Therefore, the Buddhist Jagannath was shifted before the arrival of Hieun-Tsang and destruction of the Puspagiri Vihar. In this period, Indrabhuti emerged as a worshipper of Jagannath in 717 A.D. There are various opinions about the place where the image of Jagannath was lying buried. The Madala panji (the temple chronicles) identifies this place with the village Gopali of Sonepur district of Odisha. The Madala panji records a legend of King Jajati recovering the wooden images of Jagannath from the Sonepur region, where they lay buried for over 144 years. Thereafter, King Jajati reconstructed the wooden images from Sonepur forest tribes.The book Gyanasidhi written by Indrabhuti, as published from Baroda, has descriptions about Jagannath worshipped as Buddha.

Tantra Devata: Sri Jagannath

Towards 8th and 9th centuries, it's said, Sri Jagannath had turned to be the beloved presiding deity (Ista-Devata) of Tantric or Bajrajanee Vaishnaba cult. Sri Jagannath in 'Jnanasiddhi' of Indrabhuti is described as Buddha. The Shakta Tantrics claim Sri Jagannath as Mahakali, Subhadra as gold coloured Mahalakshmi and Balabhadra as white coloured Maha Saraswati. After 12th century (reign of Chodagangadev) Sri Jagannath is being worshipped as Vishnu. Prior to this He was known as Mahabuddha and as a tantric deity. It is understood that during such period the doctrine of Tantra had its influence on Sri Jagannath, and on Vimala who is also inside the Jagannath Temple wall. Even today, various tantric rites are performed during Sri Jagannath's worship. The presiding deities Vimala

and Sri Jagannath, and Purusottama Kshetra of Puri have been respectively accepted as 'Bhairavi', 'Bhairav' and 'Bhairav Kshetra' by the followers of Shakta Tantra. Because Purusottam Kshetra was a major ancient seat of Tantra and Vimala was its presiding deity, Her authority is felt here even today. Therefore the Prasad of Lord Jagannath is only offered before Vimala. Mahaprasad in Puri is initiated according to Tantric means. Prasad is not considered to be Mahaprasad unless and until it is offered to the goddess Vimala. Again, on Suklastami (the eighth day of bright fortnight), in the month of Aswina, goat is sacrificed before Vimala.

As the idol of Subhadra is related to the idol theory of Lord Jagannath so, it's indicated, Tantra is involved in the process. Skanda puran states: *'tasya shakti swarupeyam bhagini stree pravartika.'* Many consider Subhadra as the sister of Lord Jagannath. But it does not appear appropriate for Subhadra to have a place beside Jagannath as His sister. In tantric tradition sister is being accepted as force. In Uddiyan Tantra, Jagannath is described as Mahakala with whom the practice of Dakshinachar and Bamachar kind of worship is latently prevalent. The worship of Astadevi (eight number of goddesses) – Dakshina Kali, Ramachandi, Charchika etc. beside the Jagannath Temple and that of Vimala inside the Temple point out to the tradition of Tantra. Prominence of tantric worship is found in the rituals of Sri Jagannath who is why worshipped with Bhairav mantra. But, He is also worshipped with the Nrusingh mantra. His Prasad items, consisting of coconut water in bell-metal goblet in place of wine, cakes made of black-gram which comes under non-veg category and sheep-head shaped ghee boiled dal-rice (khechedi) in place of sheep head, clearly gives a picture of tantric system.

Provision of the deities putting on nose rings is yet another example of tantric tradition. According to *puranic* (Sarala Mahabharata) version, Brahma, having been cursed, takes the form of Subhadra and is worshipped as the sister of Jagannath. *'Adhara Pana Neeti'* which is performed during car festival is also an example of Tantra worship. The deities are offered a special drink called Adharapana (*Adhara* means lips, *Pana* means drink) during car festival. After offering the divine drink the big pot will be broken by Sevayat on Ratha (Chariot) . The Adhar Pana is not at all for devotees. It is only for the god and goddess who has stayed on chariot on the period of Rathyatra to guard Lord Jagannath, Subhadra and Balavadra. They are said 'Rath Rakhyak', otherwise they are known as divine spirits like Chandi, Chamunda, Bhairab like Tantric god and goddesses etc.

Jagannath; the Vaishnav God

Sri Jagannath, Balabhadra and Subhadra, the deities of Kali Yuga are recognized as Sri Krishna, Balaram and Subhadra of Dwapar Yuga. During 12th century A.D., when Chodagangadev of Ganga dynasty was ruling Odisha, Sri Jagannath was depicted as the incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Ramanuj had reached Odisha then and introduced the Vaishnabic kind of worship in Jagannath Dham. Erecting Laxmi Temple inside the Jagannath Temple, and Jayadev's writing of 'Gitagovinda' and describing Jagannath as Vishnu, Krishna, Narayan, Madhab and Gopinath therein indicate the influence of Vaishnaba cult on the tradition of Sri Jagannath. After when Sri Chaitanya came to Puri, the kind of worship followed in Vaishnaba cult was fortified further.

Jagannath is worshipped as Purushottama form of

Vishnu. Gaudiya Vaishnavs have identified him strongly with Krishna. Balabhadra considered the elder brother of Jagannath is worshipped as Shiva. Subhadra considered Jagannath's sister is considered as Brahma in some versions and worshipped as Adyasakti Durga in the form of Bhubaneshwari in other versions. Finally the fourth deity, Sudarsana Chakra symbolizes the wheel of Sun's Chariot, which attracts the Sauras. The conglomerate of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan Chakra worshipped together on a common platform are called the Chaturdha Murty or the "Four-fold Form".

Other Assimilation and synthesis of Sri Jagannath

Some believers compare Sri Jagannath with Jesus Christ also. They claim Him as the Christians' Deity due to some similarity between the idol of Jagannath and the 'cross-mark' of Christianity. Some researchers say that Jesus had come to Puri. Cross-shaped woods are tied up to the Ratha during Sri Jagannath's car festival. The pictures of moon and stars drawn on the Jagannath Rath symbolize the religion of Islam. The Sikhs believe, that there is a deep relationship between Jagannath and their religion. In 1506 Guru Nanak the founder of Sikhism made a pilgrimage to Puri to visit to Jagannath. As per tradition, Guru Nanak was not allowed into Jagannath's temple. Nanak instead recited devotional hymns in the sea shore of Puri. Jagannath appeared in the dreams of the Gajapati King of Puri forbidding him to perform any rituals in the temple, when he went to hear the *Bhajans* of Guru Nanak. The King was surprised to find Jagannath present when Nanak recited his hymns. On the whole it can be said that Sri Jagannath is the people's deity or the deity of human religion. He is the deity of the universe.

Sumerian Civilization and Sri Jagannath

There is some historical evidence that a trade relationship had developed between ancient Sumera and Puri. About 4500 years before Christ some brave people began to live in the regions of Tigris and Euphrates river mouths by the Persian seacoast. They identified themselves as the dark-headed people. They were the Sumerians and they were believers in God. They used to erect, in every city, a multilayered very high altar made of bricks as the temple of gods. A multistep staircase was raised to reach the altar. Sumerians called this multi-layered pyramid as *Ziggurat*. They considered their god as the master or the highest authority of the city. Although every city state had its ruler or leader they could not exercise more power. They governed the state only as a servitor of the Deity. A bulky amount of landed property was assigned for the Deity. Such type of system was seen in case of the Gajapati kings of ancient Odisha.

The shape and structure of Puri Sri Jagannath temple's inner site so appears as if there was once a three layered stone pile or *pyramid* or *Ziggurat*. The present Sri Jagannath Temple has been built on the highest layer after making some changes to the three-layered pyramid. Now the first main layer of this pyramid is completely buried under the ground. The two temples of Lord Shiva, Pataleswar and Aisaneswar, built upon it is buried 20 feet underside due to expansion of the second layer. So this may be assumed that the height of this layer was 20 feet high. Maybe, the expansion of the second layer and construction work of the temple had been carried out after completely pulling down the third layer.

Today, Odia lexicon is found to have a number of

Sumerian terms in it. Similarly a number of villages bearing names of Sumerian cities are also found to be in Puri and its peripheries. This has been pointed out earlier that Sumerians were having commercial deals with ancient Odisha through the port of Puri. So the Sumerians had perhaps built several small habitations or towns in Puri and regions around it and named them after their towns and cities. From all this references this is understood that different gods and goddesses were being worshipped for quite a long period on the Ziggurats built by the Sumerians. The word 'jagati' found in Odia language refers to a high seat or altar. Maybe the word has been derived from the Sumerian word Ziggurat. And, the major deities, installed and worshipped on the high alter (jagati) built by the Sumerians at Puri, were, in due course of time, called 'Jagati Nath'. This is assumed to have happened under the influence of Jain religion. It may be said that the word 'Jagannath' has been eventually developed out of the word 'Jagati Nath'.

Nabakalebara of Sri Jagannath : The Practice
First Phase: Banajaga Yatra and Daru Anweshan

According to Odia Bhagabata, *'Marttya mandale deha bahi, debata hele hen marai'* that means 'Even a god, if bears a body in the earth, is bound to die.' Man when takes birth in the world is destined to die. Birth and death, being the axiom of life, applies also to the wood-idols (Daru-Vigraha) installed on the grandiose throne (Ratna-Singhasan) of the holy temple (Sri Mandir). Removal of four old idols, searching for holy woods, carving of new idols and installation of the Brahman are among the major procedures of Nabakalebara. Nabakalebara means 'new body'. During such period Sri Jagannath takes a new body

after discarding His old physical body. The term Nabakalebara is an ancient ritual associated with most of the Jagannath Temples when the Idols of Lord Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshan are replaced by a new set of Idols.

According to astrology, the festival of Nabakalebara of *Daru Vigrahas* is observed when twin months of Ashadh fall in some year. Twin months of Ashadh fall sometimes between eight to eleven years. But generally twin months of Ashadh happen to come between twelve to nineteen years. After Nabakalebara festivals of 1969 and 1977, the 1996 Nabakalebara was the last of the last century. The first Nabakalebara of the current century is being observed this year i.e. 2015.

Out of four fortnights of the twin months of Ashadh, the 2nd and 3rd fortnights together is known as the intercalary month. Generally 28 days make a lunar month and 30 days a solar one. Thus the differential days between lunar and solar years make almost a month every year. So the due provisions of this intercalary month are determined by the various calculations of the astrologers.

The first preparatory phase of Nabakalebara is *Banayaga Yatra*. This is a very important ritual. Several principles like oblation, sacrifice, eating of ghee-boiled rice (khechedi), fasting without water, felling of trees etc need to be sincerely followed while in search of holy woods. According to the proprietorship records of Sri Mandir, Banayaga Yatra ritual, the first phase of Nabakalebara, begins from 10th day of the month Chaitra's bright fortnight i.e. 65 days before Devasnana Purnami. It is, in proprietorship records of Sri Mandir, mentioned that on 10th day of the month Chaitra's bright fortnight, after the midday offering,

the Pati Mohapatra goes up to the Ratna Singhasan and brings the command (order) of four *badas (Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarsan)* offered and touched to the deities' divine bodies. Then he hands over three of the *'ajnamalas'* (order of the deities in the form of flower chain) to the Badagrahee Daita and himself takes the one of Sudarshan. Staying near Sri Mandir's raised seat of 'anasar', the Bhitarachha Mohapatra ties 'gotabara lagi sari' (a divine cloth, Gitagovinda Khandua) to the Daita and Pati Mohapatra who have had *ajnamala* for searching the holy woods. Then four-hand length saris are tied round the heads of other Daitas. After this, Bhitarachha Mohapatra, at the gate of Jay-Vijay, ties 'gotabara lagi sari' round the heads of Deulakaran, Badaukaran and Beherakhuntia. Besides, Bhitarachha Mohapatra hands over cotton saris (patani) to Lenka, Viswakarma and Viswabasu. This is called as the sari-tying ritual. After this sari-tying ritual begins, the making of Yajna Kunda, Nirman Mandap, Adhibas Griha, Ankuraropan Griha and Daru Griha also begins at Koili Baikuntha. After the sari-tying ritual ends, everyone with obeisance to Daru Brahman proceeds to the Grand Palace. Lenka leads the procession with the silver wheel of Sudarshan on his hand.

When the Daru search-team reach at the Grand Palace, Rajaguru, after the holy touch of king Gajapati, hands over betel nut, coconut, *akshata* (white raw rice) and *patani* (cotton sari) to Acharaya and Viswabasu in a silver plate. Then Rajaguru, on behalf of Gajapati King, formally requests the Daru searchers' team to duly collect the holy woods (Daru) for Nabakalebara. This is known as Guateka Niti (ritual of handing over beetle-nut). Then the Daru search team goes to Jagannath Ballabh Math and stay there for three *olis* i.e. one and half days. In the

team, one Daitapati servitor takes the role and responsibility of Viswabasu and Pati Mohapatra of Vidyapati.

After staying for one and half days at Jagannath Ballabh Math, the Banayaga Yatris (the search team of holy woods) start their journey to Goddess Magala at Kakàtpur by 3 a.m. or early before dawn next day. With them, Deulakaran carries in his responsibility all the materials needed for sacrificial works, holy foods *(habishanna)* and other activities by a cart. The search team of holy woods *(Banayagis)* lives on habishanna only from start to the finish of Banayaga Yatra. Rajaguru, Brahmin Purohit (priest), Daitapati, Pati Mohapatra, Viswakarma, Moharana, Lenka, Deulakarana, Barakandaj and such others form the Banayagi or search team. From Sri Jagannath Ballabh Math they walk barefoot through Gundichaghara, Nrusingh Temple, Baliguali, Chhaitana, Gopa, Nuahat etc to reach Deuli Math near Kakatpur. Deuli Math, beside the river Prachi, is the original seat of Mother Mangala. At later periods She has been shifted to Kakatpur. After the team of Banajaga Yatri arrives at Deuli Math, Deulakarana informs the servitors of Mother Mangala of Kakatpur about their arrival. Then Her servitors reach Deuli Math with Chhatri (umbrella), Taras (fan), Ghanta (bell), Kahali (trumpet) etc. The search team of Banayaga Yatri, doing their chores at river Prachi, proceeds to the holy place of Mother Mangala, the presiding deity of Kakatpur, in a grand procession. After they reach the temple of Mother Mangala, due arrangements are made to cleanse the temple for the deity's *majana* (polishing). Daita people hoist flag of blood-red colour atop the Mangala temple and bathe Her with 108 pitchers of perfumed water. Then Mother Mangala is brushed and purified *(marjana)* with chua (scented oil), chandan (sandal), sindoor,

aguru, haladi (turmeric) etc and then dressed with new sari. Then She is offered with the Mahaprasad brought from Sri Mandir.

Mother Mangala has a subtle divine relation with Darubrahman Jagannath. By special prayers and worship She is being pleased and then She guides in finding out the Mahadarus or holy woods. After majana and Chandipath (recitation of Chandi hymns), the Brahmins chant Swapnabati mantra and the Daitas lie down prostrate before Her. Swapnabati mantra is chanted for 108 times. This is a sort of Vaishnabic mantra. On recitation of the mantra with devotion and deliberation, Darubrahma himself gives orders or guides in dreams through Mother Mangala about His power and location of the holy woods.

Second Phase: Identifying Mahadaru, Installation and Entry into Darugriha

Mainly, in the second phase of Nabakalebara, identifying the holy woods, felling of the trees, *chaupata* or sizing of the holy woods are duly carried out and then Mahadaru woods are carried by Darusagai (cart) to the newly built Darugriha at Koilibaikuntha in Sri Mandir. Holy woods for Sri Sudarshan, Sri Balabhadra, Sri Subhadra and Sri Jagannath are identifyied during Banayaga Yatra. Searching of the holy Darus is the main and important work of Banayaga Yatra. Related Daitapati Sevayats (servitors), under the guidance of leadsmen (dalapati and upadalapati), are divided into four groups and then they proceed to different directions everyday in search of holy woods. Guided in dreams by Mother Mangala the Banayagis walk to nearby places of a river, cremation ground, forest, temple area etc. Certain signs or indicators are examined before identifying a tree for the sake of holy woods. The work of identification is

done by the team of Daitapatis, Pati Mohapatras, Dalapati, Upadlapati, Viswabasu and others. Such work is performed according to the ancient scriptures kept in homes of the Daitapati servitors. The scripture is kept secret because of its reference about the holy wood symptoms and carving procedures of the idols. Procedures involving identification of holy woods, their transportation, worship of the holy woods, their installations etc are duly carried out as prescribed in the scripture. Details about rituals of *banaprabesh* (forest entry), *daru samgraha* (collection of holy woods), *banayatra* (forest festival) etc have been recorded in 'Bhvishya Purana' and 'Baikhanasa Agama'. Describing about the process of tree felling and wood carrying it is said in Baikhanasa Agama that there are three types of trees – female, male and neutral or hermaphrodite eunuch. A bottom to top straight, round shaped and multi-branch tree is male. A bulky-trunk and thin-top tree happens to be female. A thin-trunk and bulky top tree is considered to be a eunuch. Idol for the Goddess is carved out of the female tree and that of the Gods out of the male ones.

Guided in dreams by Mother Mangala, the holy woods search team after having their habishanna remains in search of the holy woods. The Neem tree with following signs is identified as Mahadaru.

1. The tree should be pretty old
2. The tree should have four to seven branches in it
3. The tree trunk should be a straight and solid one up to 12 feet high from the ground
4. Upper parts of the tree should have no birds' nest

5. The tree should be close to any river, cremation ground, monastery or temple

6. The tree bottom should have ant-hill, home to snakes

7. The tree should have Varun and Sahada trees nearby it

8. The tree should have the signs of conch, wheel, mace and lotus init

9. The tree must not have any branches cut or felled.

The search-team opts for trees having such kind of nine signs in them. The holy wood for Sri Jagannath, according to Skand Puran, need to have the colour of Indian madder with the signs of conch and wheel. This has been referred to in Suta Samhita that along with the signs of conch, wheel, mace and lotus, the holy wood colours of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra, Sri Subhadra and Sri Sudarshan must be dark, white, yellow and red respectively. Daitas make the choice of four holy woods (Mahadarus) for the four deities' idols according to scriptures like Indraneelamani Puran and Suta Samhita. Then, Viswakarma makes the measurement of the holy woods. After identification and measurement, choosing of the holy woods gets completed. Then, all sides of the holy woods are purified and houses/huts/ corners like *Sabarpalli,* Yanjasala, Yanja Mandap and Ankuraropan are built. Daitapatis, Pati Mohapatras and other servitors observe complete fasting during Ankuraropan and the Yanja. The appointed Brahmins and Purohits perform sacrificial oblations for 1100 times chanting Nrusingh and Patal hymns in a very virtuous manner. The role of Nrusingh in Sri jagannath's Nabakalebara rituals is very important. Lord Nrusingh the Incarnate had emerged out of a wood pillar so He is invoked in

case of holy woods for the deities of Sri Mandir. The dangers of evil planets, epilepsies, devils, wicked women, ghosts, vampires, goblins and snakes are removed by chanting His mantra. Nrusingh mantra is fundamental to the holy-wood worship and Nabakalebara rituals. So Nabakalebara activities are carried out by Nrusingh mantra.

This mantra is chanted before Mother Mangala for finding of holy woods. Sacrifice is performed with the mantra during Banayaga, after identification of holy woods. The holy pitcher is placed at the north-east corner of Yanjasala invoking Lord Nrusingh. Then the Acharya worships the axes of gold, silver and iron with Mahasudarshan mantra. Then the holy powder (bhasma) is collected from the sacrificial pit of Banayaga and smeared on the identified holy woods. Someone, chanting hymns of Sudarshan, draws picture of a man on the identified Daru. The head of the man in the picture is drawn down side and legs upside. After the picture of a reverse man is drawn, Acharyas and Brahmins chant mantras of Lord Vishnu and Narayan, then touch the holy woods, cover them with white cloths and sacrifice pumpkin-gourds secretly. After the sacrifice is over, the axes of gold, silver and iron are sanctified and handed over to Vidyapati, Viswabasu and Viswakarma respectively. First, Vidyapati (Pati Mohapatra), going round the holy wood, strikes at it with the gold axe. Then Viswabasu (Daitapati), chanting hymns of Sudarshan, strikes the holy wood with the silver axe, and finally, Viswakarma and other Moharanas strike at and fell the holy wood or tree with iron axes.

After the holy tree/s falls down, Viswakarma and Moharanas cut it into pieces according to measurement and

retain only their core portion. This pith portion is called as *'chaupata'* (size timber). Then the remaining branches, leaves and barks etc of the holy tree are buried (*patali*) under a large pit. Moharanas make four new *sagadi* (carts) to bring the four chaupatas to Srikshetra for carving out the four deities. The wheels of the sagagdis are made out of banyan tree woods, axis out of tamarind tree woods and their two poles out of Kendu tree woods. Every sagadi is fixed with four solid wheels. Then the chaupata is duly covered with silk garments and kept on the darusagadi. The holy chaupata is tied tight with the sagadi by ropes. Then one by one the darusagadis leave the places and start their journey towards *Koilibaikunth* (the divine burial ground of Lord Jagannath and other three dieties) of Srikshetra. Brahmins, at the time of pulling the *darusagadi,* recite *shakunasukta* (sooth-sayings). People, of the regions or villages the darusagadis go through on procession to Srikshetra, warmly receive and pay their homage to the holy chaupatas. When a darusagadi reaches Alamchandi temple near Atharanala and Srigundicha temple in the outskirts of Puri, Gajapati Maharaja is informed. Next day, on behalf of Sri Mandir, the holy wood or mahadaru is received and taken with a colorful procession of trumpets, drums, gongs, umbrellas, sankirtan (chanting Names with music & dance) etc to Koilibaikuntha through the north gate. Then the holy wood or mahadaru along with the sagadi is taken to and placed at newly built darugriha (house/corner for the holy wood) with Pana (sweet drink) offering after the darusagadi reaches Koilibaikuntha. Idols of the four deities are carved out of these mahadarus (holy/grand woods) after Snanapurnima.

Third Phase: Construction of the Four Deities

The Snanapurnima (full moon day of/for ablution) is the swanakshatra or birth day of Darubrahman. The holy woods of the four deities, at first of Sudarshan, then of Balabhadra, then of Subhadra and finally of Jagannath, need to have duly reached *Koilibaikuntha* before Snanapurnima. The ablution rituals of the four old deities are performed at Snana-Mandap (bathing platform) on the sacred day of Devasnanapurnima chanting hymns of Samudrajyestha. Similarly the holy woods are also bathed in Darugriha of Koilibaikuntha. Then the construction work of the four deities is secretly carried out at Koilibaikuntha. This is the third and very secret phase of Nabakalebara. Activities involved in this phase are not open for the public to see.

Shed for ankuraropan, idol making platform, yajnasala, Nrusinghmandap, adhibasa griha and nyasa darugriha etc are temporarily built at Koilibaikuntha befor Snanapurnima. After construction of yajna-mandap and other houses at *Koilibaikuntha*, the Brahmins, on an auspicious moment, seed five crops of white-mustard, black-gram, green-gram, horse-gram and wheat etc at ankuraropan shed. Henceforth, a sacrifice is made everyday night. After bathing rituals of the new Mahadarus are complete on the day of Snanapurnima, they are brought to the construction platform (mandap). The temple administration offers *khandua* (scarf) to Daitapatis and Viswakarma Moharanas on the month of Ashadh's first day of dark fortnight. By this they are declared and assigned to carve out the Deities' idols. So, making of the idols starts from the month of Asadha's second day of dark fortnight. Works for carving out the idols are sincerely carried out under the custody of Pati Mohapatra, Badagrai Daita

and other skilled Daitas and Viswakarmas. Making of four holy idols and of Madhav is completed in the month of Asadha's thirteenth day of dark fortnight. Performing an oblation on the very next day i.e. chaturdashi, Tilapayas is offered as sacrifice. Then the newly built idols are bathed with elixir (panacea or all-remedy) waters. Acharya performs the rituals to give life (prananyasa) to the new idols. This ritual is being performed in sleeping state of the newly built Idols. After this, Viswakarma bathes the idols. By evening in the fourteenth day of dark fortnight, installation works of nyasadaru and newly built Idols are completed. Final oblation is offered at the end of the sacrifice. Gajapati Maharaja, being asked by Rajaguru and Acharya, remains present in the performance. The tradition of offering final oblation by Gajapati Maharaja, it is said, is being followed from the time of King Indradyumna.

Fourth Phase: Insertion of 'Brahma' in the newly-built Idols or Change of Bodies

Insertion of *Brahma* (the divine life material) is carried out after making of the newly built Idols secretly in Koilibaikuntha (the divine burial ground of Lord Jagannath). Brahmas, which are inside the old Idols, are secretly taken out of them and placed/ inserted in the navel center of the new Idols. This is called as the *Ghataparibartan* or the change of divine body. This is the fourth phase of Nabakalebara. These secret rituals are forbidden for the public to see. Even the skilled and senior Sri-Anga servitors, who carry out the responsibility of Brahma Insertion, do not know anything about the Secret Brahma. The work of Brahma Insertion is done by Badagrahi Daitapati and Pati Mohapatra. This being a secret ritual, they keep it all secret.

The old Idols are put to Golaka Samadhi (divine burial) in Koilibaikuntha after insertion of Brahma inside newly built Idols. Only in the month of Asadha's fourteenth day of dark fortnight all the four old Idols are put to Golaka Samadhi in Koilibaikuntha under the Siali creeper. Red garments are spread inside the resting ground of Golaka Samadhi to prepare three numbers of beds. The old Idols of Sri Jagannath, Sri Balabhadra and Sri Subhadra are laid on the beds separately, their heads being kept to the north side. But the old Idols of Sri Sudarshan and Sri Madhav are laid beside the old Idols of Sri Subhadra and Sri Jagannath respectively. Then, putting sandals and camphor, they are covered with silk garments. Thus the final resting rituals of the old Idols are carried out and completed. Idols of the sarathis (riders), horses, dwarapalas (janitors), parswadevatas (wall/side deities), kalashas (pitchers), parrots, dhwajadanda (banner-sticks/rods), cots, beds, pillows etc, which had been fixed to the old chariots, are buried towards feet of the buried Idols. Golaka Samadhi rituals of the Deities' old Idols are made complete before sunrise. Sri-Anga Sevaka Daitapaties, the personal caretakers of the Deities, perform the job. Daitapatis follow the rituals of asaucha (defilement, caused due to birth or death of a relation). Funeral of the Idols are observed such as it is followed after death of any human being. Daitapatis observe mourning. Early before dawn in the day of Amabasya, the Daitapatis smear sesamum/til oil on their body at Jhulanamundi near under Muktimandap and take bath in Markand pond (one among the five tirthas/pilgrimages in Puri). Back from the bath they change 'panibuda luga' (soaked clothes) with new ones and take 'shantiudaka' (peace-water) and '*nirmalya'* (dried out Prasad of the Deities) which are kept near Patitapaban (Savior

of the fallen). Then, the Daitapatis take 'habishanna' (holy food) once in a day for eleven days to observe and complete the funeral. They do not shave during asaucha or defilement. During *'sudhikriya'* (the divine funeral rite) or purification rite they cleanse and whitewash their residential homes. On 10th day of the funeral, beside Markand pond, they shave beards and their women folk cut nails. *Badagrahi Daitas* of different diety go through a complete shave of their head and beards. Then they smear oil, take 'suddha snana' (holy baths) in the pond and put on new cloths. After such bath, Daitapatis come to Sri Mandir, wash their feet at 'baishi pahacha' (holy 22 steps) with turmeric water and take nirmalya and shanti-udaka. They take Mahaprasad tonight today/that night. Mahotsava (festival) is observed on 'trayodashi' (thirteenth day). On that night Muktimandap Pandits, all Brahmin Mahajanas from 'shoala shasan' (16 Brahmin villages) and 'batisha karabada', servitors of *'Chhatishaniyoga'* (thirty six categories of servitors of Srimandira), Sannyasins (saints) and Puri's different monastery heads (matha mahanta), other saints and holy persons are cordially invited to the festival. They all are served with Mahaprasad.

Scholars differ about the secret spirit elements/secret core components (brahmabastu) of the Deities. According to some, the Brahman inside the navel-lotus (nabhikamala) of Sri Jagannath is the half-burnt body lump (apoda pinda) of Lord Sri Krishna. Some others give their opinion that the Brahman inside the navel-lotus of Sri Jagannath is a small but shining idol of Neelamadhab measuring ten fingers width. Tantrabadins say that the 'brahmabastu' is a gold-made Yantra. Yet according to others, the Nabhibrahma is a living Salagrama (round-shaped

sanctified stone, worshiped as the icon of Lord Vishnu). As per Madalapanji, Jajati Keshari the king of Soma dynasty had, from Sonpur, released the Brahman, which had been brought here covered with new garments. Then, after release of the Brahman from Sonpur, Jajati Keshari had, by his direction, identified Mahadaru and built the idol. Meanwhile, Sankaracharya had brought Salagram from Nepal and placed the Brahman in the navel-lotus of Sri Balabhadra, Sri Subhadra and Sri Jagannath to establish them as the Vaishnaba Deities. Buddhists consider the Nabhibrahma (Navel Brahman) as the teeth of Goutam Buddha.

In short, the Banayaga Yatra begins from the tenth day of Ashadh's bright fortnight and the Mahadarus, after identification and other rituals, reach Koilibaikuntha before Snanapurnima. Mahadarus (Grand Holy Woods/Divine Woods) take their grand/ holy baths on Snanapurnima after which Yanja and making of Idols begin. Making of Deities' four Idols (Chadurddha Murty) and Madhav's Idol are made complete within fourteen days i.e. before the evening of Chaturdashi (fourteenth day of Ashadha's dark fortnight). On the night of Chaturdashi, rituals of gupta rathayatra (secret car festival), Brahma Samsthapan (Installation of Brahman) and Golaka Samadhi of old Idols are performed and then one month's *Maha-Anasar* (literally means vacation) begins. By this Lila (divine play), Parambrahma (Absolute Brahma), discarding his puratana kalebara (the old divine body), takes on Nabakalebara, the new body. This is the secret Lila of the Supreme Lord.

Nabakalebara in History

According to Madalapanji, Raktabahu had invaded

Odisha during the kingly rules of Bhaumakar Dynasty by perhaps eighth-ninth century. By the effort of Bhaumakar king Sobhan Dev, the Idols of Sri Mandir had been buried underground (patali) at Gopali village of Sonpur to save them from the terror of Raktabahu. A banyan tree, which got to the name of Dianbara (godly-tree/god-tree/god's tree/divine-tree) by local people, was planted on the spot. The following ruler, Jajati Keshari First (922 – 955 A.D.) of Soma Dynasty got the news and went to the village. The king made to cut the banyan tree and recovered the Idols' feeble bodies out of 'patali' state. Then he, on consultation with contemporary religious heads and local Sabar priests, made to make Nabakalebara of the Idols. Afterwards, the Sabar priests came to be known as Daitapatis.

Lord Jagannath, the adored Deity of Odia people, did not have any attack from outside from the rules of Soma Dynasty to the rules of Ganga Dynasty and its 1568 A.D. king Mukund Dev. The same year, Kalapahad, the Commander of Bengal Nawab Sleman Karnany, invaded Odisha and tried to destroy the Idols of Sri Jagannath by fire. So to save from the tyranny of Kalapahad, the king of Kujang brought the Idols to his fort and made to make their Nabakalebara. Subsequently, king Ramachandra Dev of Bhoi Dynasty got the opportunity to bring Sri Jagannath back from Kujang and reinstall the Mhavigraha (Divine Idol) at Puri. During the rules of subsequent Bhoi Dynasty king Purusottam Dev, the Deities of Sri Jagannath were frequently transferred from Puri to various remote places to save from the invasion of Mogul Subedar. The Deities had been transferred to Kapileswarpur, a place eight miles away from Puri, due to frequent invasion of Mogul Subedar Makram Khan in 1609. Again in 1610, the Deities' three chariots were burnt by the invasion of

Kesu Das. In fear of Kalyan Malla's Khurda invasion in 1615, Sri Jagannath was transferred to Mahishanasi near Chilika coast. In 1617, due to Puri invasion of Makram Khan, Sri Jagannath was transferred and kept in secret at Gajapada of Banapur. During the rules of King Narasingh Dev in 1622, Sri Jagannath was transferred to the Manatri fort of Ranapur owing to Ahamed Beg's Khurda invasion. Again in 1623, foreseeing imminent dangers, Sri Jagannath was kept secretly inside the temple of Sakhigopal. In 1698, during Akram Khan's invasion of Puri, the Brahman of Sri Jagannath was kept in hiding behind the temple of Goddess Vimala and then reinstalled after doing Nabakalebara. In 1731, during the rules of Khurda king Ramachandra Dev Second, Taki Khan had invaded. So the Idols of Sri Jagannath were taken to and kept in secret at Tikali of Khalikote. Finally in 1733, Ramachandra Dev Second brought Sri Jagannath back to Puri, executed Nabakalebara and then Rathyatra, the car festival.

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NABAKALEBAR RITUALS OF PURUSOTTAM SRI JAGANNATH

Purna Chandra Mishra

Purushottam Kshetra or Srikshetra or Puri Dham is the holy land of Lord Jagannatha- the Lord of the Universe, the Lord without hands and feet and the still-centre of every Odia's cultural, religious and aesthetic quest. Lord's temple at Puri is very unique in many ways. The original and genesis of the temple create a sense of awe and wonder in every human heart. More interesting are the festivities, ceremonies and devotional practices associated with the temple. Readers, scholars and viewers not only get startled by making an analysis of the rites and rituals which centre round the Lord but also get absorbed and deeply influenced by a divine impulse. There is in fact no

end to such analysis and discussion. With such a perspective, if we analyse and examine the importance of the re-embodiment ceremony or Nabakalebar of Lord Jagannatha Lord Balabhadra, sister Subhadra and Sudarshan, we are bound to be exhilarated and awed by a rewarding sense of wonder.

Referring to the books on the techniques involved in the art of idol-making, one becomes aware of the fact that the longevity or life-span of the idols depend primarily on the material with which the idols are made. The longevity of idols made-from gem, metal, wood, chitra(picture), and soil is ten thousand years, one thousand years, twelve years, one year and one month respectively.[1] The idols of Lord Jagannatha, Lord Balabhadra, sister Subhadra and Sudarshan are made from woods *(Daru)* and hence their life-span is only twelve years. That is why there has been the necessity for the re-embodiment or Nabakalebar of those deities. At this point, one question baffles and intrigues our mind why did the king who could construct such a huge temple of stones, allow the idols to be made from the wood? An answer to this question would compel us to throw light on the significance of using the wood as the material for the making of the idols. According to the scriptures, it is known that the worship of idols made from wood is more fructifying than that of the idols made from other materials. One cannot ignore at the same time the fact that in ancient times, much before man learnt' the use of metals, he treated trees as the manifestation of eternity. Tree-worship was very much in the vogue in those times. The tree-worship originated from the fowler or tribal tradition. In ancient books the only industry, the importance of the wood in the use of idol-making practices has had been variously discussed. Varahamihir in his much acclaimed book *Brihat Samhita*[2] has

mentioned that the worship of idols made from wood or earth or soil, bestows longevity, beauty, velour and victory. He also stated that the worship of idols made from gem, gold, silver, copper and stone would sanction wellbeing, health, fame, issues or children and possession of landed property respectively. *Kashyap Samhita* and *Vishnu Samhita* two ancient scriptures also assert similar views. The significance of the worship of idols made from wood has been recorded in *Vaikhanus Agam.*[3] It is known from Sanskrit and Oriya classics like *Skanda Purana,* [4] *Darubrahma Gita* and *Deula Tola*[5] that the king Indradyumna got a piece of wood or *daru* from the mouth of the sea at Banki, from which, as he was advised in the dream he ordered the idols of Lord to be prepared. Thus the reasons which impelled the king to go for the idols from the wood are clear indications of what have been emphasized in the scriptures. In an unpublished palm leaf manuscript or *Pothi,* entitled *Pratima Lakshan Soudhagam*[6] it has been mentioned that although idols can be made from the wood of the trees like *sal, mundimundi, sinshapa, teak, kendu, khaira,* casurina, *gambhari,* yet the idols from the *neem* wood remain the best. It is also true that a very old *neem* tree, coming in contact with time is transformed into sandal wood. Neem tree tastes sour and bitter and hence it remains unaffected and uninfected by worms and insects. The *neem* fruit or seed and its bark have medicinal effect.[7] According to *Agamshastra* trees are of three types- the male, female and the neuter. N*eem* tree is identified as a male tree and hence its wood is strong and the best.[8] That is why it is the best kind of wood for making the idol of Lord Vishnu. *Bamdeva Samhita* attests this fact.[9] In *Bhabisya Purana* it is specified that the *neem* wood is worshipped by all castes and races: *Nimbadyaha Sarvabarnanam Bruksha*

Sadharanasmutah.[10] Lord Jagannatha, the Lord of Universe, is being worshipped by all types of men, with no social religious barriers. So *neem* wood is the best of the idols of Lord Jagannath.[11] As the idols of Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra, sister Subhadra and Sudarshana are made from the *neem* wood, and as the longevity of the wood is twelve years, the re-embodiment or Nabakalebar ceremony of the Lord takes place in every twelve years.

The re-embodiment or Nabakalebar ceremony is observed in two phases. In the first phase the *daru* or the tree is identified after conventional ritual worship of the forest. The process of identification of the tree, its feeling and transportation to the temple must be completed before the *Devasnana Purnima* (The full moon day of *Jaishta).* The second phase includes, making of the idols, their installation, *saptaabharan, khalilagi* (flour-paste), *khadilagii (white* colour) and *banakalagi* (colour). This entire process must be completed before *Netrotsaba* or *Asada Amavasya,* The second phase takes about forty five days. The year in which the earth experiences two *Asadas,* maintaining equilibrium between *Chandraman masa* and *Souramana masa,* the re-embodiment ceremony takes place. This month is considered to be more sacred than all other months, and it is known as *Adhi masa* or *Mala masa.*[12] This phase of forty five days is also known as *Maha Anasara. Even* if people strongly believe that the re-embodiment ceremony takes place in every twelve years, the astrologers advance the view that twin *Asadhas* (June-July) can appear in every 8,11,19, and 27 years. According to *Braharspatya* calculation, between 1001A.D. to 1996A.D.the twin *Asadhas* occurred 72 times. From these, in the gap of 8, 11, 19, and 27 years the twin *Asadha* occurred for 22, 16, 33

and 1 times respectively[13]. It is practically difficult to say in which of these years the re-embodiment ceremony took place. Verifying the records and journals from the 19th century one comes to the conclusion that the re-embodiment ceremony took place in 1809, 1828, 1836, 1855, 1874, 1893, 1912, 1931, 1950, 1969, 1977 and 1996. In 2015 once again the convention the re-embodiment ceremony will be observed.

There are two kinds of re-embodiment ceremony. The first kind involves making of the idols, their installation, change of the *Brahma* and the second kind is known as *Sri-angafita* (the attire on the body of the deity). Both the kinds involve traditional rituals. The change of *Brahma* is done on the *ktushna chaturdashi* or 14th day of the declining moon. During the *Sri-angafita,* only minor repair works of the idols are done. The *Brahma* posited in the idols is not touched during this repair work.

The year in which the re-embodiment or Nabakalebar ceremony takes place, sixty five days before *Devasnana Purnami* or from 10th day of the declining moon in April, a few *daitas,* 5 Brahmins, 4 *Biswa Karma, Deula Karana, Tadhau Karana, Behera Karana, Lenka. Biswabasu* and *Pati Mahapatra* etc. set out for the identification of the *daru* or tree. On the 10th day of the declining moon in April, soon after the midday worship, *Pati Mahapatra,* identifying a sacred moment, ascends to the *Ratna Singhasan* or the golden throne of the Lord Jagannath. He removes the *Agyanmala* (a garland which symbolises as permission of the Lord) from the hands of the deities. He gives it to the three chief of the daitas who are known as *Badagrahi daitas.* He holds the garland that sticks to the Sudarshan (the

wheel). These three *Badagrahi daitas* are Dasa Mahapatra, Swain Mahapatra and Dasa. These three are considered to be the chiefs of three *badas* (group relating to each deity). When they arrive at *Anasar Pindi* near the Kalahat gate *Agyanamala,* the Mahapatra ties on their head the *Gotabarlagi Gitagovinda Khandua,* on the heads of the *daitas* waiting here in quest of the sacred tree or daru, four feet *baralagi saris* are also tied, on the heads of the *Deula Karana. Tadhau Karana, Behera Karana,* who wait at the gate of Joy Bijoy the *Gotabarlagi saris* (a kind of *Sari)* are tied. The Mahapatra also presents cotton saris or thin muslin to Lenka. Biswakarma and Biswavasu.[14] This entire process is known as *Sari-bandha niti or* ceremony. During this time the Brahmins arrive at *Jagyanshala, Nirman Mandap, Snana Adhibash gruha, Ankuraropan graha* and *Darugruha* for sacred starting.

All the participants then move out to the Lords Golden throne to offer prayers to the Lords. Then they pass through *satapahach* (seven steps), *Ananda Bazar, Baishi pahach* (twenty two steps) and *Singhadwar* (Lions gate) accompanied with different musical instruments. They go to the Gajapati's palace. Gajapati touches bettle nuts, coconuts, *tandul (rice),* golden ring and muslin and hands over to *Rajguru*, the royal priest, who hands over these to Acharya and Biswavashu and requesting them on behalf of the King to collect the auspicious sacred *daru* for the process of Lord's re-embodiment. This is known as *Guateka* (handing over the charge) ceremony.

The group of investigators or searchers moves to the Sri Jagannath ballav *matha* (monastery). Lenka leads the procession holding a silver wheel, the symbol of Lord's

permission. After one and half-days staying there, they proceed to the shrine of Mangala at Kakatpur. The reason behind making a stay in the Jagannath Ballav Matha is to make all arrangements for the search and to maintain secrecy. Some even opine that if someone from the group would fall ill, he is supposed to return and will be here until the other searchers come back with the *daru.*

Because the searchers walk down to Kakatpur from Puri, they also take rest on the way. *Daitas* are not permitted to take shelter under someone's house. So they have to take shelter under the trees and cook food for themselves. But the same rule is not applicable to the Brahmins. So they can take rest in the temples or *mathas* or schools. They follow a strict routine in terms of their food and rites. They observe these rules and principles till the sacred *daru* is stored in newly constructed *daru gruha* or store house of *daru in the Koili barkunth near the north door of Sri Jagannath temple.*

At Kakatpur they take rest in *Deuli Matha.* This is situated on the sacred bank of the river Prachi. It is also under the direct control of *Emar Math.* Legends say that the deity Mangala used to inhabit here in this math. In course of time the deity was shifted to the new temple at Kakatapur.[15]

The next day, very early in the morning, the searchers take bath in the river Prachi. They go in a procession to offer their prayers to Mother Mangala.[16] This procession is accompanied by different types of musical instruments. After they arrive at the temple of Kakatpur Mangala, special arrangement for the ceremonial bath (*majana*) of the deity is made. Items which are used for this ceremonial bath include

chua, turmeric, sandalwood, vermilion, 108 pitchers of water etc. After this bath the deity is dressed with a new *sari* gifted by the temple of Lord Jagannatha. *Gajamanda* and *Chadheineda* (a kind of prasad) are also offered to the deity. The Brahmins begin chanting mantras on *chandi.* It is believed that Mother Mangala, the source of knowledge and energy, has to be appeared through such prayers and offering so as to get the clue from her about the presence of the *daru* and its identification. Once the clue and permission are obtained from the deity Mangala, under the aegis of *Badagrahi daita,* the searchers set out for their quest for *daru.* The tree which bears the characteristics as discussed hereafter, the searchers treat it to be of the right kind of sacred *daru.*

It must be an old tree, with four to seven branches. It must be straight and solid up to ten to twelve feet from the foot. No birds must have built nests on its boughs. The tree should be available either on the river bank, or a grave yard, *matha,* temple. Ant hills indicating the habitat of snakes should be there at the foot of this tree. Not far from this tree, other trees like *Varuna* and *Sahada* should be around. The tree must bear the sign of conch, wheel, mace and lotus.[17] According to *Skanda Purana* the tree should be blackish in colour, besides having the signs of conch and wheel.[18] The colours of the logs or *daru* of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra and Sudarshana are black, white, yellow and blood-red respectively. *Suta samhita* also ratifies the same aspects. It also advances that the paste of the tree is slightly sweet instead of being bitter.[19]

The *daru* containing these aspects is considered to be the best. Biswakarma pays a visit to the spot to measure the

tree. Only then the process of identification or selection of the *daru* comes to an end. The searchers then go to the tree along with the Brahmins and start to construct *Sabarpalli,Ankuraropan mandop for* sowing seeds for performing *Banajaga.* First of all the searchers along with the Brahmins go to the auspicious *neem* tree identified for Sudarshan. After cleaning the area around the tree they prepare for the *Sabarpalli* for *daitas. Jagyanshala* for *Yangya* the altar and the house for seedling or *Ankuraropan gruha* became part of the *Banajaga* process. The houses of the searchers or *daitas* are covered with leaves as a symbol of the tribal civilisation. The *daitas* take rest there. Near the trees, Lord Vishnu is worshipped and *Yangya* is performed. The tree is covered with white cloth after giving it a sacred bath. During the time of bath the Vedic hyme *Purusashukta* is uttered. With the help of five types of seeds, the Brahmins perform the ritual of sowing. The *Pustakacharya* completes the process by drawing mandals or *tantric* diagrams in the night. After tying the garland (*angyamala*) on the tree, five Brahmins such as Acharya, Brahma, Charu, Samidhacharya and Pustakacharya begin the *Yangya* before the ritualistic *Banajaga,* The *daitas* or searchers and the Brahmins observe complete fasting from the beginning of the *Yangya* to the final falling of the tree.

The *Pustakacharya* advises on the process of the Yangya. On four doors of the *Yangya sala* the four Brahmins recite the four *Vedas.* The *mandalpuja* is performed by the *Pustakacharya.* In the north-west corner of the *Yangya shala* on the eight petals lotus the weapons are worshipped.[20]Besides in the north-east corner on the *Sarbotabhadra mandala* the prime deity is worshipped. In the south-east corner, *Bastu mandal,* in the south of the south-east corner, the *Swastika mandala* and

Nabagraha mandala are made and offered worship with all sanctimony. In this *shala,* Pati Mahapatra and Badagrahi *daita* utter the mantras of Patala Nrushingha. The process also includes the worship of *shala puja. Vaishnabagni Samskar* of tree, of equipment, and sacrifices are also made for the Gods of ten directions. After the first days rituals all take rest uttering the *mantras* dedicated to *Swapnabati.*[21]

On the second day morning, the Acharya worship the *shala*, perform *Yagna* for the Sun God, makes sacrifices for ten gods. Worship of Nrushingha and weapons get repeated. At last the tree is fenced with a cloth to enable them to secretly perform the sacrifice of gourd. The *Yagna* then comes to an end. After that the Acharya brings axes of gold, silver and iron and handed over to Bidyapati, Biswabasu and Biswakarma respectively for starting the cutting of the sacred tree. They touch the axes one by one and then finally the tree is cutting down by some sacred people of the locality. Only when the tree falls on the ground, offerings are made so that the fasting *daitas* and Brahmins satiate their hunger by taking drinks and beaten rice. The tree is cut into pieces only the central part is spared. This process is known as *chaupat.* After the *chaupat* the branches and leaves of the tree are buried in a dug hole on the ground. Then the arrangement to take the logwood to Puri is made. In order to carry the logs to Puri a new trolley, with four solid wheels, is made. Its wheels are made from the wood of *Banyan* tree: its axis from that of tamarind tree and the main rod from *Kendu* tree. Following the ritual worship of the chariots, the Brahmins worship this trolley. While lifting the logs "*Uttistha Brahman Sapte*" *mantras* are chanted. While placing the logs on the trolley, "*Rathe Tisthan Nayanti Bajinah*" *mantras* are chanted by the Brahmins. The

logs covered with new cloth,[22] are tied by the help of muslin thread. The trolley is dragged usually by the cane ropes. But these days, cane ropes are used just to give respect to the ritual. Otherwise the ordinary ropes are used to avoid arty trouble. The Brahmins utter *Sakunasukta* at the time of dragging the trolley.

On the way to Puri, the villagers on either side of the road throng respectfully and make the air resonating with the sound of conch and tambourine. If the trolley comes to Puri through the village route like Chaitana, Nuanai, it is supposed to halt at Nrushingha temple in the western side of the Gundicha temple. If it takes a route via Pipili, Satsankha, Sakhigopal and Chandanpur, the trolley has to halt at the temple of Alamchandi, near Atharanala. With the trolley's arrival at Puri, the Gajapati king of Puri is informed. Next morning the king orders his people and courtier to bring the trolley to the lion gate of the temple with much pomp and show wherefrom the trolley passed through Lakshmi *bazar*. Northern Gate and finally reaches in Koili Baikuntha. There the logs are worshipped by offering drinks. Then the logs are kept in the newly constructed chamber i.e. *darugruha*. This entire process gets completed before the *Debasnan Purnima*.

On the outskirts of the temples north side, Koili Baikuntha is situated. According to *Smritishastra*[23] *"Uttare Sarbadevata, Uttare Sarbatirathani"*. That's why Koili Baikuntha is considered to be one of the most sacred and auspicious place among the *Nabavaikunthas.*[24] Because of the sanctimony attached to Koili Baikuntha, the logs are kept here until the completion of the idols. Even after the installation of these idols,

along with the transplantation of the *Brahman* on the 14th day of the rainy season, the old idols are buried here. On the full moon day of *Jaistha* the idols are given a sacred bath on the bathing altar. The old idols in the chamber of Kodi Baikuntha are also given a sacred bath. Under the supervision of Pustakacharya, the process of installing the idols begins. The Acharya, Pustakacharya, Samidhacharya. Charu. Brahma and royal representatives are cordially felicitated. After the ritual bath, Daita and Pati Mahapatra get Laxmi Nrushimgha from the Southern chamber to the Nrushingha *mandapa* where cot and bed are spread. Ritualistic prayers are offered to Lord Jagannath in the meantime. In the *Yagnashala* every *Yagnya* is performed and sacrifices are offered in the form of *Kantipitha* and fish. The sacrifice of fish is conducted secretively by these *sevayatas.* On the fourteenth day, *tila payas* is also dedicated and offered as sacrifice. Then the new idols are given a ritualistic bath with the help of herbal water. The *Yangya* is performed once again to implant the life spirit in the sleeping idols. Biswakarma, uttering *Srisukta mantra* and *Purushasukta mantra* gives sacred bath to the new idols. The *yangya* comes to a close with the arrival of the Gajapati king of Puri. Pati Mahapatra takes the charge of these new-idols.

In the midnight of 14th day, the *ghata* gets transplanted secretively. This is known as change *of Brahma.* In the evening of this day, the doors of the temple remain closed, after the Lords *Badasinhara* visage. No one except four *daitas* and Pati Mahapatra would remain inside the premises of the temple. On the *baishi pahach* or twenty two steps *of the temple,* the *Deula Karana* guards alone with Lord's main cutlas. The *daitas* are given charge of the deities of the temple. In the midnight, finding

the most sacred time, the *Brahma* from the old idols is removed and implanted in the new idols. Before it is implanted this *Brahma* is surrounded by flowers musk, tiny basil leaves and jasmine flowers. Three *daita,* covering their eyes, wait outside the *anasara pindi* to assist Pati Mahapatra to complete this process of transplantation of *Brahma.* Then the sacred place where the *Brahma* is placed is covered by cloth. The old idols are taken to *Koili Baikuntha* for the burial where a 9 feet deep and 6 feet wide pit dug by Kothasuansia. Like the funeral rites performed in the families, the *daitas* also observe certain rites after the burial of the old idols. In the temple of deity Mangala a lamp is lit. On the 9th day of the declining moon the *daitas* use oil to their bodies. Near the Markanda pond they shave themselves and have bath. Putting on new cloths they come to the main temple and at the twenty two steps (*baishi pahach*) they wash their feet with *turmeric water* (*haladi pani) and* take *mahaprasad at* night. After the fourteenth day, the *Saptabharana* ritual (the ritual of painting and dressing) begins. This is followed by the ritual of *Banaklagi* or *purna sriangaraga* which is performed by the painter Dutta Mahapatra. The rituals like *Netrotsaba* and *Nabajauban darshan* lead to the *Nabadina yatra or car festival.*

Thus it is evident that the process of *Nabakalebar* or re-embodiment is cumbersome, arduous yet interesting and magical. It proves the immorality of the soul. The transplantation of the *Brahma* is in itself a manifestation of what is described in the *Gita* as the transfer of the soul from one body to another when the former becomes old and outworn.

In the conclusion this much can be said with authenticity that Lord Jagannatha is a symbol not of any

particular religion but involving with all religions and all religious values. Yet what is striking in the rituals of the re-embodiment is the intimate relationship that exists between the devotees and Lord Jagannath, who is not simply a God, an outsider, but who is immaculately an insider, an intimate member of our family. This process of re-embodiment eminently asserts that down the ages, through speckless devotion only the Oriyas have discovered in the Lord a God who is seminally human, a God who has been humanized to protect our hearths and homes, our bodies and our souls, the keeper and the caretaker of our being and becoming.

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LORD JAGANNATH : SYMBOL OF SYNTHESIS AND HUMANISM

Prof. S.C. Panigrahi

The human being has an innate tendency to understand the mystery of universe as well as of himself. He wants to understand the unity among diversity. He is not simply interested about thinking of things rather he attempts to find out the *summum bonum* of life. In Indian philosophy theory and practice are blended together rather we can say philosophy of value is more of importance than theoretical one. The distinctive feature of Indian philosophy is its all-comprehensiveness which finds its clearest expression in Jagannath cult. It is based on living experience. In the Gita it is clearly said (VI-46) a man's value in the sphere of religion is judged by the quality and intensity of

religious experience. The *purāṇas* were written to explain various stages of religious experiences to be easily understood by the common man to arouse feeling and sentiments that uplifts common man. Kaha Upanisad says *Yadeveha teda mutra* (what ever is in the inner world is to be found as well).

Purāṇas have been used in all times and climes for the expression of the subtle truth. Anecdotes, stories, rituals have been used to express the subtle truth. Lord Jagannath has a mystery of its own. Our interpretation if any should be spiritual rather than metaphysical. In the Vedas we find plural terms like we, you all, friends etc. In this manner these collectivities accommodated different groups, classes etc. in the cult of Jagannath.

Centuries have passed and theologians have tried their best to untie the knot related to Lord Jagannath. As usual our understanding eludes the real nature of the Lord. It is very difficult to understand the nature of divine love. Divine love is a great mystery. Mystery does not mean that it is unknowable, it also does not mean our search is fruitless and meaningless, it also is not a quest for something absurd like son of a barren mother. The mystery means power of God to sanctify our life. Jagannath is a living entity who acts in the hour of personal crisis.

We can have a glimpse of love of Lord Jagannath through myths and symbols. Here we must analyse the concept of myth and symbol. The image of Lord Jagannath is a symbol. Faith in Lord Jagannath is not an intellectual game which can be played once for all times. It is a process which is never ending. It has to be sustained by constant choice. Though it involves risk, the risk is worth-taking.

It is through the myth that the primitive man integrates the natural with supernatural. It implies that mythology uses imagery to express the divine in terms of the human. Mythological language cannot be literally interpreted. It has to be understood existentially. God cannot be used as a scientific hypothesis to explain the cosmos. God is real to us as he responds to us existentially. We can never possess absolute knowledge of God or of ourselves. But it is clear that through His Grace I realize myself and about Him. The self-realisation is not a human creation. It is a human creation. It is a part of the principle of truth inherent in creation. Lord Jagannath is the principle of truth. The language of the myth flows from the heart which is simply a symbol of direct realization. The rituals performed in the cult of Jagannath are but symbols of corresponding experiences.

Once you divide sacred from secular, the carnal and the spiritual, it is very difficult to bridge the gap. Tillich says that the divine has to be understood through religious symbols. Tillich has given a brilliant explanation of the nature of symbol and myth which will help us in understanding the nature and implication of symbols we find in Lord Jagannath. Lord cannot be described literally. Any statement regarding Lord is bound to be symbolic. System of symbols regarding Lord is called mythology. For Tillich, symbols point to something beyond itself. It is different from artificial signs. Symbol participates in the reality to which it points out. Lord Jagannath participates in the reality. Further a symbol cannot be replaced by another symbol. A symbol of God participates in the numinous being called God. A symbol unlocks new levels of reality and it is related to the hidden depth of our being.

A symbolic statement expresses revelatory event. The search for *dāru* tree is an example of revelatory event. A revelatory statement declares the mystery of being. But such revelation is not possible for any ordinary being. This revelation is possible only to persons who have the receptivity of such a unique phenomena. In Jagannath cult it is called *svapnādesha* which pure hearted persons receive it from Maa Mangala of Kakatapur. Unless people participate in some sort of revelatory situation, there can be no issue of symbolic truth. Similarly *daruchhedana*, *ghataparivartan* are also symbolic. There can be no symbols related to religion unless there is some believer. Mythological language of God's revelation has to be accepted and interpreted non-religiously. By non-religious interpretation we mean Lordship of God and his annointed over the secular world.

The function of the myth is to integrate cosmos with the sacred. In the myth there is hardly any distinction between natural and supernatural. Myth is a sacred story concerned with sustenance of the world. Myth helps us to break through of the sacred, the supernatural. Myths are necessary for our spiritual development. Lord Jagannath is a living experience which gives us energy for self-sustenance. Lord Jagannath is a mysterious God, a living symbol where a devotee participates in the loving nature of the Lord. Faith in Lord is not simply a faith but absolute power of being itself. *Śraddhā* for Lord is beyond all forms of mysticism and theism.

It can be seen that myth is the language of the unconscious, whereas science is the product of the intellect or conscious. It is peculiarity of man that man lives in an inter-play of conscious and unconscious. Unconscious in man gives a

creative impetus for his interaction with multi-dimensional cosmos. Religion uses myth to unconscious aspect of man. The unconscious is a-moral, a-logical and non-rational. Therefore in religion we use non-literal language (myth). The uniqueness of a myth is that it is a living story and devotee feels satisfied to the fullest extent in participating the acts, rituals of the Lord. Myth regarding Lord Jagannath is a living story where every devotee participates in the act of the Lord and gets inner bliss which cannot be attained from external sources like name, fame, riches etc.

We know that Lord Jagannath is, but we do not know what it is. Lord Jaganath is unconditioned, which means he is beyond the human category of intellect and literal language. No thought can grasp it. It simply expresses the fact in participating with Lord who is the sustaining power. A true symbolic statement is a witness to the state of affair through which he has experienced but cannot be expressed in words.

It is true that Lord Jagannath is a myth but He gives energy, strength, moral boost to the devotee for encountering the turbulences of the earthly world. Jagannath is not a man but to show the devotees that he is a man he behaves like a man so that he becomes towers of strength to His devotees.

Jagannath is living symbol and he as a symbol is a pointer to the ultimate reality. For Rationalists he is mysterious but for devotees Jagannath is a friend, philosopher and guide. No where it is seen that the devotee scolds the Lord lovingly for his grievances. Though he is a myth, he has to be understood as a myth. The mythic acceptance of the Lord make the devotee the real devotee. Besides everything in the Jagannath cult we

find a medley of mystery that is combined with spiritual values, philosophical concepts, colourful physical images scattered all around. The spiritual truths are housed in the ceremonial, social and geographical ideas.

Lord Jagannath is a mediator as through him the reunion of the finite with infinite is possible. He is not a third person as a mediator. He points to an ultimate reality which is beyond any finite existents. Lord Jagannath wants to show what he expects man to be. To speak literally Lord stands for a transformed and transforming saviour, giving value and purpose not to any particular sect but to the whole humanity.

The central question here is, whether Jagannath is the *avatāri* or an *avatāra.* That is whether Jagannath is the incarnated form of Lord Kṛṣṇa or He is the original Lord who manifests himself in different forms or is it that the Lord Jagannāth is an incarnation only. *Brahmapurāṇa* or *Skandapurāṇa* etc. have accepted Jagannath as Srikṛṣṇa. Jayadeva in his famous Gitagovinda depicted Jagannath as Srikṛṣṇa who has manifested Himself in different incarnations. Dibakara Das in his *Jagannath Caritamṛta* says that all the important *kṣetras* have emerged from *Srikṣetra* or *Puruṣottama Kṣetra.* Lord Jagannath is otherwise known as *Puruṣottama*, whereas Lord Srikṛṣṇa is revered as *Lilā Puruṣottama* and Lord Rama is worshipped as *Maryādā Puruṣottama*. Jagannath is originally known as Darudevatā which can be traced back to Zgveda. In Bhagabatagita Purusottama is described as the ultimate or the Supreme Purusa who is beyond the *kṣara* and *akṣara.*

"As I surpass the perishable and imperishable,
I am celebrated as the Supreme Person in the
world and in the Veda" (BG XV-18)

Lord Jagannath is described as Puruṣottama for the reason that like the Brahman of the Upanisads Lord Jagannath is taken to be formless and yet the basis of all forms. Another reason for accepting Jagannath as the supreme reality is that all religious sects find their culmination in Lord Jagannath.

Lord Jagannath does not belong to any sect. He appears to the devotee in the form the devotee wants to see. As Gita says, "As men approach me so do I accept them, men on all sides follow my path (BG IV, II)

As it is not possible to know the nature of ultimate reality, the form we worship help us for our spiritual fulfillment. Devotees of different faiths worship the same Lord but the difference is due to socio-cultural varieties. The Lord rewards those devotees whose faith is intense. So the cult of Jagannath being accommodative opposes any kind of religious fanaticism that is found in contemporary society. Who is Lord Jagannath, no one knows. But every devotee feels that he is the Lord of the Universe, compassionate and saviour of the down-trodden..

It may be observed that there is a philosophical and cultural fusion in the cult of Jagannath. In *Viṣnu Purāṇa* (51/33/41) Jagannath is synonym of Kṛiṣna and Visnụ.

Kṛisna Kṛisna Jagannath Jānetvām Puruṣottamam.

For Sāktas Lord is *Dakṣina Kālika*

Ugratārā Sūlapāni Subhadrā Bhubaneswari
Nilādre Sri Jagannatḥa swayam Dakṣina Kālika.

Acharya Sankara had come to Puri and established a math known as Govardhan math as one of the *Chaturdhāmas* and brought *Srikṣetra* in the spiritual map of India. Sankara who

holds the view that *jñānamārga* is the only path for *mokṣa* but seeing the splendour of Lord wrote Jagannathstaka and composed *Jagannāthasvāmi nayanapathagāmi bhavatume.* The case does not end here as Lord is not a sectarian deity. It can be clearly seen in the rituals the influence of Saivites, Sāktas, Gānapatyas, Tāntric, Vaisnava, Buddhism and Jainism. Vaisnava sect of Sri Rama sect call Jagannath as Raghunandana and say

Jagannāth Mahabaho Pratyakhya Raghunandanam
(*Niladri Archana Chandrikā.*)

Tulsidas has explicitly pointed out the features of Lord which is as follows:

Binupādachālahinsunaibinukāna, binukara, karahin karmavidhāna Ānandarahitasakala rasa bhogi

(He moves without feet, hears without ears, does all work without hands; he enjoys all rāsas without having ānanda).

Similarly other spiritual gurus like Ramanuja, Kabir, Nanak, Sankaradeva and SriChaitanya had preached their own philosophy in Srikṣetra. Pancasakhās were greatly influenced by Jagannath. Pancasakhā is the name assigned to the group of poet-metaphysicians who assimilated and propagated the synthetic view of the previous religious trends like Buddhism, Jainism, Tantra based on the metaphysics of Jagannath cult. They were the proponents of Utkaliya Vaisnavism inspite of the great influence of Sri Chaitanya's Gaudiya Vaisnavism. While the exponents of Goudiya Vaisnavism Kṛṣṇa is the supreme reality. Panchasakhās hold the view that Lord Jagannath is the supreme reality. According to DibakaraDasa, the author of *Jagannatha Caritāmrta*:

Jagannatha Je solakala, tahunkalae nandabālā

(Lord Jagannath has all the sixteen talents, Lord Kṛṣṇa has only one of these talents)

Pancaṣakhās identify time and again Jagannath with Buddha which is explicit in the following verses:

"You are present here on the shore of Mahodadhi

You have appeared as Buddha in the Kaliyuga to redeem the sinners of the world".

(Sarala Dasa–*Mahābhārata, Madhya Parva)*

x x x x

"Oh Prabuddha, you have appeared
as the incarnation of Buddha"
(Jagannatha Das – *Srimad Bhagavata*, V)

x x x x

Namaste prabhu Jagannāth, jārasarira e jagat
Tu visvamaya visvapati, mahā purusa sarvagati.
(Jagannath Dasa)

One can find the relation between Saktism and Lord Jagannath. There are three Śakti images in Srimandira like Vimalā, Mangalā and Bhubaneswari. Vimalā is called Bhairabi and Jagannath as Bhairava and she is described as Kṣetreswari.

"*Vimala Bhairabi Yatra Jagannath tu Bhairaba.*

The Prasad becomes mahaprasad once it is offered to Vimala.

It is doubtful how far Jagannath is related to Jainism. Scholars claim that the affix *nātha* of the name Jagannath

resembles the name of some of the Jaina Tirthankaras. There are 22 steps leading to the interior of Srimandir. These steps symbolize 22 Jaina Tirthankaras. The Jaina concept of *Kaivalya* is another name of *mahāprasād.*

Nanak, a great devotee of Lord Jagannath saw the *ārati* of the Lord. He in a trance explained the significance of *ārati* as stated below

The sky is the salver
The sun and the moon are lamps
Stars are studded in it as jewels
The chandan scented wind from the
Malaya mountain scatter
across the fragrance of
myriad flowers.
Thus is thy worship performed.
Thousands are thy form yet
Hast thou a form?
Thousands are thy lotus feet
Yet hast thou a feet?
Thousands, thy noses to smell,
Yet hast thou a nose?
O wonder of wonders!

In seventh century there was a great influence of Buddhism and Jainism in Orissa. Indraphuti, the author of *Jñānasiddhi* mentions Lord Jagannath as manifestation of Buddha. The beginning lines of his work starts with prayer to Jagannath Buddha

praṇipātya Jagannatham sarva
jeenavararchitam

sarva Buddha mayam siddhivyapinam
gaganopamam.

Panchasakhās propounded *Pinda-Brahmānda* doctrine. This is in consonance with the *gupta puja* called as *dhupa* which is conducted four times a day. In this ritual the devotee or the worshipper suspends his mundane body and in meditation he is transformed to the divine body. In this ritual, the worshipper and the worshipped become inseparable. In the context of navakalevara it is relevant to point out the *pinda-brahmānda* doctrine. It is doubtful whether this theory is influenced by Tantric Buddhism. One of the main exponents of Pancasakhā Balarama Das explains this in following verses

"what is called the big temple (Jagannath temple)
is nothing but your body"

(Balarama Dasa, *Virata Gita,* IV)

"Again, whatever is in the *brāhmanda* is in your *pinda.*
I express this *tattva* to you.
Pinda and *brahmânda* are identical" *Ibid.*, IV.

This assurance of the Lord for the down-trodden is amply examplified in stories related as Salabega, Dasiabauri, Balaram who were real devotees of Lord Jagannath.

In SrimadBhagavata the Lord says:

"My devotees are my heart and soul and I am the heart and soul of my devotees. My mind is wholly occupied by them and their mind is wholly occupied by me."

(SrimadBhagavata, 9.4.68)

Again Lord says

"I have no freedom. My heart is in the grip of devotees. I depend wholly on them; for they love me and I love them". (*Ibid.* 9.4.63)

If symbols differ, then Hindu religion would not have accommodated the religious practices that are opposed to each other. All the symbols, practices and revelations are necessary preliminaries to religious experience.

In Bhaktirasamṛta Sindhubindu it is said that Lord rules not by force but by love and in whose willing service the devotee attains the highest satisfaction. Lord is brother, friend and treats us as his children. We naturally love our friend and children. The mother does not love her child for any gain. Similarly our love for Lord is natural and spontaneous. In case of Jagannath a real devotee requires three things - self-effort of the aspirant (*karma*), the grace of the Lord (*kṛpā*) and love for the Lord. In the highest form of bhakti, the duality between the Lord and the devotee is reversed. In this state the Lord desires to be in company with the devotee. The Lord loves his devotees just as he is loved by them.

One can find a unique relation between Aryans and non-aryans. There is a story that Lord disappeared and he came in vision to king Indradyumna and asked him that he can be traced at Banki Muhāna of the sea in the form of a log of wood. He advised Savara chief to assist him to locate Neelamādhava and holy daru was found there. As is well known Jagannath is the Lord of Savaras. King Indradyumna sent his priest Vidyapati. When Savara king prayed the Lord not to leave that place, the Lord told him "*Suna re Savara tora puspafale amarā na manila ebe jibā nilāchale".*

One can find reference to Lord Jagannath or Dāru worship at Puri according to Rig Veda.

Ado yad dam plavate sindoḥ pare apaurusam
Tadra bhasva durhano tena gachha parastaram

(Rigveda 10,155,3).

Pandit Nilakantha Das writes :

"It may be mentioned that in the vedic literature of Rigveda (X-81-4) the word Dāru (wood) is used to indicate the material of which the universe (Jagat) is made. Jagannath is specifically known as 'Dāru Brahman [world substance symbolized in wood both in purānas and by the people".

Sri Chaitanya locates *Dāru Brahma* in *Srikṣetra.*
Sindhu bata mule Neelāchala dhāma
Kṣetre Sri Purusottama ati ramya sthāna.

Laxmi Purāna of Balarām Das depicts strong opposition to the caste system which was prevelant at that period. Once Mahalaxmi visited Sriyā Chāndāluṇi, an out caste but found in her the real devotion in her heart. Hearing this incident Balabhadra was very angry and instructed Jagannath to remove her from the temple. Mahalaxmi was Goddess of wealth and being offended made arrangements that the brothers could not get a drop of water.

Being thirsty and hungry they reached Mahalaxmi asked her to forgive them. Mahalaxmi allowed them to the temple on one condition that there should not be any caste distinction and every one irrespective of caste would be allowed to go inside the temple and they should take mahāprasād together.

Chāndālu Brāhmana jaya khua khoi hebe samaste
khāina hasta jalena dhoibe Hādira hastu Brāhmana
chāndala khaibe Brāhmana khāi hastaku mundare pochhibe

(Lakshmi Purāna, p.20)

This episode shows how there was no caste system in Jagannath cult. It is said that in savara culture there is worship of wooden log (*dāru*). For them, He is dārudevatā or *Jagant. Jagant* mean the highest incarnation of the Supreme Reality. Lord Jagannath is identified with the jinas of the Jainas, Bhairava of the Śāktas and Rudras of the Śaivas.

Jagannath has become *rastra-devata* and *sriksetra* became the meeting place of all religious sects. In *Brhanuārā Sinhapurana* Sriksetra has been stated to be heaven on earth.

Puruṣottamāt pārakheta nāstatva Prthvi tale
Bhusvargamiti vikhyat devanamapi durlabham

This resembles Otto's statement in his book, 'The Idea of Holy' that the Idea of the Holy rises above conception of the Truth, The Good and the Beautiful. It is a category *suigeneris*. It cannot be reduced to any other. So he calls it 'MysteriumTremendum'. It is full of mystery which inspires human beings to reach them. It can be experienced but not described.

Srikṣetra is the *kṣetra* of sacrifice, non-violence and love. *Nilachalakṣetra* is the body of *dārubrahma*. This has been clearly stated in *Kapilasahinta "kṣetra nilāchalam punya dārubrahma svarupini.*

He is the mysterious Lord, therefore it is said

Sarvarahasyam puruṣottamasya devenajānānti kutaḥ manusyaha.

The Lord is so mysterious that it is not known even to God, what to speak of the ordinary man ?

Lord Jagannath gives the message of Humanism. Humanism as an articulated mode of thinking can be traced to certain socio-politico-religious developments in post medieval time. It assumed centrality of human values. "Humanism as a philosophy represents a specific a forth-right view of the universe, the nature of man and treatment of the human problem" (C.Lamont, *The Philosophy of Humanism*; p.9). Man is neither a machine nor a biological being subjected to the impersonal forces of nature but a self-asserting and self-governing rational being. Though there are different forms of humanism we are interested in the features of humanism as found in the cult of Lord Jagannath. The core of humanism is found in the cult of Lord Jagannath. Religion, *per se* does not mean sects or creeds that divide groups and societies, but is one which describes the way of making the righteous use of reason. In asserting the essential divinity or holiness of man it ascribes the real dignity of man. It infuses the cardinal values of love, tolerance, sacrifice which makes man truly human. Religion, *per se* when practised in letter and spirit, to bound to work towards liberty, equality and fraternity in the social plane in fighting out the man-made differences. It holds out lofty optimism that man can grow into godhood or to the likeness of God. Thus *Jagannāthcetana* is more humanistic than the so called humanism. A humanism broad-based on religion is bound to embrace the whole cosmos within its fold. The concept of *dāru* as *devatā* is finest example of Jagannath culture.

The human values envisaged in the cult of Jagannath do

not mean the values pertaining to human well-being only. Rather they point out that the real human value consists in respecting the diversity as the multiple expression of the one. The multiple expressions include the human as well as the non-human existence. It is a vision of spiritual community where the well-being of man as well as others is to be taken care of through love and service. Nothing is to be viewed as valueless if it contributes in some way or other to the well being of humanity and environment. Jagannath Dasa says

Vrksara rule yene asi, pathika
visrama vasi
Srama Sarina Yanti chali, se
Vrksa ruhanti Kahani
Temanta maya e sansara, ke
Pita ke kahe kumara
Kasthe pasana taru truna, sakala dehe Narayana

(Just as the parers by take rese under the tree for a while and go on their our way and no one has a claim of the ownership of the tree. Here no one is father or son. The truth is warayana, the Lord who pervades in everything.)

Singing the glorious contribution of a tree Lord Krṣṇa says

Ansu visāla devaprastha, dekha e vṛkanka mahattva
Pare karanti upakāra, sujana prāṅinka bebhāra
Śitavarasā griṣma dukha sahi āmbhaku dyanti sukha
Dhanya jivan ehānkara sadhanā prāni upakāra

The tree is great and precious. Amid all vicissitudes and turbulence it helps us to curb global warming, flood and natural calamities for welfare of human community. The tree is

symbol of self-less service. In this connection, it is not out of place to say that *dārudevata* which is made of tree gives us a continuous reminder to worship the Lord Jagannath which gives a message of self-less service as the highest human virtue.

In Upanisads it is said "Vṛksha ivastavadha divyatistha· tyekah". In other words tree is source of creation and source of protection of the created world. Tree-worship is in our tradition. Tribal people worship tree as *Khambeswari*, the tradition is still present as we find Khambeswari worship in some temples.

Now the question is, why neem tree is chosen as *dāru brahma*, It is because neem tree is the best tree as it has medicinal value and tantra cannot affect it or insects cannot destroy it. In the text *Pratimā Lakṣana Saudhagam* it is said:

Nimba pradhan mete sāṁ pratimanam vinirmatau

Though neem tree is very old and bitter with the appearance symbol of Lord it becomes sandal wood and leaves become sweet. According to Sāstras trees are classified into *purusa, stree* and *kliba.* As neem tree belongs to *purusa* category it is strong and appropriate for *vigrahanirmāṇa.*

Some further rituals can be cited to establish humanistic values in Jagannath cult. In the car festival the king plays the role of cleaning the *ratha* in public showing that the ruler is simply a servant of the people. So jagannath cult sows the seed of democracy in the history of thought. It points out the basic feature of equality among men. We also see that the Lord comes out of his abode to give *darsan* to persons of all castes. He is said to be the patitapāban or saviour of the down-trodden. He loved the devotion of Salabega, a muslim throwing a challenge to religious fanaticism. Worship of Lord Jagannath is not limited to particular caste, creed and faith. So he is lovingly called as

sakhā or friend of the devotees. Though Lord is worshipped, he behaves like a man. He is dressed in warm clothes in winter. In summer, he uses sandal wood paste. To please the devotees he takes different shapes and forms (*besha*). *Katha Upanisad* says that ātman is charioteer and body is the chariot. Similarly it is the belief that in Ratha Yatra, Lord takes the form of Vāman and the devotee who has controlled his sense organs sees the ātman in his body and he overcomes the cycle of birth and death. Therefore there is famous saying that:

"*Rathetu Vāmanamdrstyā*
Punarjanma navidyate"

Sraddhā in Lord Jagannath is the affirmation by the devotee he hopes for and trusted in. By doing this he grows into a valuable life which the real man craves for. It is true that we never possess absolute knowledge of the Lord. But we have absolute knowledge only in our faith in the *kṛpa* (Grace) of Lord.

Navakalebara is a message to the devotee that he is subject to the birth and death. Here death is not complete annihilation, the divinity remains, simply the *ghata* or the body is changed. Here one is reminded of the Gita where it is stated that "Just as a person casts off worn-out garments and puts on others that are new, even so does the embodied soul cast off worn out bodies and take on others that are new". Similar view is also found in Katha Upanisad 1.6. "Like corn a mortal ripens and like corn is he born again".

All his rituals are like human beings. In *Navakalebara*, he dies, takes new form and his funeral takes place. All his sevakas perform the funeral rites, takes food once and shave their hair and cut the nails as we perform in our rituals. He sits with his brother and sister supporting the joint family system. Like a human being he quarrels with his wife Mahalaxmi, then

again begs excuse for his mistake. Once he went to Kanchi, to assist the king and on the way He felt thirsty and ate curd from *ManikaGaudini* and gave him his *ratnamudi* as he did not have the money.

In *snanavedi* he takes bath with 108 pots of water and like human beings he catches cold and fever. He takes rest which is called *anavasara pujā*. He is given medicines like coconut water, *dasamularista* and *phulleritaila*. When he is cured he appears in *netrostava*.

Lord Jagannath is an ideal. He is a value. Devotees stnve to achieve the ideal, but once the ideal is achieved it becomes actual. Once it becomes actual there is no striving for perfection. Jagannath is an ideal, man is searching for. We can reach nearer to the ideal but not to the actual as he can never become an actual. Therefore Sankara repeatedly says that Brahman is indescribable as He is not finite. But we should be cautious of the fact that the very nature of the ideal is of the nature 'should be' and so goes beyond any fact.

Lord is a mystery – Navalkalebara is a mystery. No one knows what is that divinity that is transferred from one *dāru* to another. All the priests are forbidden to see that mysterious entity because Lord has to remain hidden so that his devotees grow and enrich their personality. The peculiarity of Lord Jagannath is that He does not want to reveal his omnipotent power, which will hinder the spiritual development of His devotees.

To conclude we can say that Jagannath cult transcends the so called religious sects – it is religion *a priori*. Lord gives a a message to devotees by the rituals he performs pointing out that he is a true humanist and real centre of synthesis of all faiths, cults and sects.

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THE UNIQUE CONCEPT OF NAVAKALEVAR

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Navakalevar is an oriya word literally which means (Nava - New, Kalevar - Body) newbody. To be more accurate and precise in English Navakalevar means the NEW EMBODIMENT. So in the cult & culture of Lord Jagannath Navakalevar is the celebration of that rituals in which the periodical renewal of the wooden images of Sudarshan, Balabhadra, Subhadra & Jagannath takes place in the temple of Jagnnath, Puri - a ceremony which is unique in many respect in the field of Hindu religions worship. An unique concept of death & birth of the Deities a ceremony which is never found in any other religions of the world. This unique and rare celebration of Navakalevar involves a total replacement of the four worshipable images

through the new ones after a gap of certain period as per the traditions in which the old images are discarded and buried underground.

There is a deep relationship between the evolution of concept of Lord Jagannath and the Navakalebar. From the philosophical point of view this relationship exists from the time immemorial. A parallel 'can be drawn between the philosphical ideas behind Navakalevar and the entire creation - specially the humanism. But this specific word Navakalevar is commonly used only in case of Lord Jagannath the creator of the whole universe. Navakalevar as understood by the common man is the celebration of that process of shedding the old body. But it has *two* dimensions. One is the spiritual where as the other side is the scientific one.

The spiritual or the philosophical angle -

Considering the spiritual aspect it is seen that every living being whether it is a worm, bird, animal, or even mankind dies one day or the other and the "soul" leaving the worn out body enters into a new body. All living beings are mortal where as soul is immortal. This is the eternal truth. This mystery over the change over of the soul from old one to the new body is beyond the comprehension of common man.

vasamsi jirnani yatha vihaya
navani grhnati naro' parani
tatha sari rani vihaya jirnany
anyani samyati navani dehi.

As a man shedding worn out garments takes other new ones, likewise the embodied soul casting off worn out bodies

enters into others which are new. This philosophy of Gita is reflected in the process of Navakalevar. Hindus believe in the philosophy of re-birth and by observing this ritual of Navakalaver Lord Jagannath also proves the same.

jatasya hi dhruvo mrtyur
dhruvam janma mrtasya ca
tasmad apariharye'rthe
na tvarm so citum arhasi.

For in that case death is certain for the born and rebirth is inevitable for the dead. You should not therefore grieve over the inevitable. So we now come to know that the death is not the last chapter of human life. Likewise in Navakalevara although Lord Jagannath is the creator of the Universe yet in the cycle of time, He even come across that inevitable death and again takes rebirth through a new wooden body- thus symbolising the concept of death and re-birth in the Hindu philosophy.

Social and Scientific angle -

We know that the Deities are made of wood & hence decay is inevitable. It is nothing new that the wood gets decayed as we have seen in our house hold materials made of wood. It is a natural phenominon. More over if we study that the "Murti Sastra" we come to know the longivity of each idol made of different materials.

1. Idol made of Gem - Ten Thousand Years.
2. Metallic Idols - One Thousand Years.
3. Wooden Idols - Twelve Years.
4. Paintings - One Year.
5. Idols on Clay - One Month.

Hence as the idol of Lord Jagannath is made of wood scienotifically its longivity is only for twelve Years. After completion of twelve years this wooden Deity starts getting decayed. So the change of the idols at an appropriate interval is a must. However since we have seen that Jagannath's Navakalevar takes place at a gap of 12 to 20 years this wooden Deity can even stay for 20 years also. So whatever may be the spiritual aspect since the longivity of the wood is for twelve years only it is essential to change the idol and make new idol with fresh log. This timely change of Jagannath's body is known as Navakalevar.

Why it is made of wood ?

It is quite natural that a question comes to our mind that when the King Indradyumna could make such a huge temple for Lord Jagannath, and he could store so much of gems, diamond, gold and riches in his store room (Ratna Vandar), he could have made the Deity in gold itself. There was no difficulty for the king. But why did he make it of wood ???

According to religious scriptures the worship of. wooden Deity is more fruitful than worshipping statue made of stone or gems. Barahmihir has mentioned in his book" Brihat Sanhita" that worshipping wooden Deity is for longivity, strength & victory, gems Deity for human welfare, gold for fertility, silver for fame, copper Deity for creation and stone Deity for land. It is also mentioned in another book named "Agam" that worshipping the Deity made of wood is the most fruitful one. Besides that before the stone age people did not know the use of metal and they ware worshipping the TREE only. This worshipping of tree was in the culture of both the Aryans and Non- Aryans. In India in so

many parts we find the tribals worship the Deity made of wood. Since the forest and especially the plants are of great use to man kind and since the existance of this creation depends primarily on plants (forest) many plants like Aswastha, Bela, Amalaki, Tulasi and Neem etc are worshipped by the mankind. This is seen not only among the Hindus but also among other religions. While "Bodhidruma" or "Aswastha" is worshipped by the Buddhiststs the Christians worship the "Cherry" plants.

According to legends the king Indradyumna the great votary of Lord Vishnu getting instruction through his dream brought sacred log from "Banki Muhan" the sea shore and made the Deities out of it.

But why Neem Tree alone?

Now the question arises as to why did not they make the Deities out of more strong and durable wood like teak sisu instead of Neem ? As per the puranas plants are differentiated as Male, Female & Neutar. Since Neem tree is Male tree, strong & durable - so the best log is used for making the Deity.

Scientifically Neem tree has got the medicinal power of very high order. Every part of this tree is used for medicine purpose. Since it is bitter in taste neither any insect nor white ants can destroy it. When Neem tree becomes old its milky juice tastes sweet and smells like "Chandan" (Sandal) and its bark being cracked takes different shape and design like Sankha -Chakra - Gada - Padma. These signs tell us how old the Neem tree is. So it helps in collection of the sacred wood for Lord Jagannath.

Geographycally it is found that Neem tree is available

every where - even may be in your garden. So it is an easily available tree. Besides that as per our tradition Daitas prey to Goddess Mangala of Kakatpur to get the information about the sacred tree. Goddess Mangala's Temple is situated near the river Prachi where the soil is fertile to grow dense forest. In the past there was dense forest in and around Puri town and a common plant like Neem was available in plenty. Since the selection of sacred Neem tree for the Deity is justified-socially & geographycally.

Why double Ashadha ?

Generally when two months of Ashadha fall in one year Navakalevar takes place. But why is it so ? What is the reason behind this? First let us see how two "Ashadha" fall in one year. In order to keep balance between the lunar months and solar months in every 32 months one extra month comes. This extra month is called as "Adhimasa", "Malamasa or Purusottam month" According to "Malamasa Puranas" this month is considered as the best month. So the Navakalevar of Lord Jagannath takes place in that year when this 'Adhimasa' fall in Ashadha. But generally it is seen that this double 'Ashadha' falls at a gap of 8, 12 & 19 years.

It is described in the ancient Puranas that the day on which the king Indradyumna got the floating log near Banki Muhan sea shore as per his dream and the day on which that old carpenter Ananta Maharana started making the Deity - happened to be the year of double" Ashadha" and may be from that time onwards this tradition is being followed for Navakalevar.

It is also said that 'KALIYUGA' began during this

"Malamasa chaturdasi Tithi" and in Dwapar Yuga Lord Srikrishna left his body at the critical juncture of Sankranti & new moon. Since Lord Jagannath is viewd as Lord Krishna's incarnation-so to commomorate this death anniversary even in Kaliyuga this Navakalevar of Lord Jagannath is celebrated.

However all these reasons are from legends and epics. But the acceptable argument is generally "Double Ashadha" fall after a long gap of years which helps for the protection of the wooden Deity. Much time is required to complete all the parafernelia of Navakalevar smoothly. It is not possible to get so much of time in each year. Because after Snana pumima (Annual Bathing ceremony of Jagannath) the Deities go to 'Anasara' because of ill-ness when general public are not allowed to see Deities and after fifteen days that is on 'Pratipada' day Jagannath again gives 'Darsahan' which is called" Naba Youban Vesha". It is not possible to complete all the rituals of Navakalevar during these 15 days only specially carving of the new wooden Deities. But during the 'Malamasa' after Snanapurnima - Anasara is observed for 45 days and this period is sufficient for making all these arrangements. (Searching out the sacred divine wood, carving of new images, Painting on images etc) Mainly for this reason' Nabakalebar is observed during the month of "Double Ashadha".

Two types of Navakalevar

Actually there are two types of Nabakalebar which is followed in the temple. One is making of new idols and change of life substance and the other is removal of Srianga" that means only the outer coverings of the images are removed replacing

new coverings. So during the year when new idol is to be made Daitapatis go to Goddess Mangala's temple at Kakatapur for her blessing and indication is given in their dream. As per the instruction of the Goddess they go in searchof the sacred Neem tree and following all the rituals cut the Neem tree, bring the Daru to Puri where the Deities are made inside the temple. But when the Double Ashadha fall after a gap of only eight year as it was in 1977 after 1969, generally there is not much deterioration of the wooden Deities. In such cases the time consuming & expensive process of body change over is avoided and in its place the process of removal of SreeAnga takes place. That means the seven layers of coating that covers the body of wooden Deities are removed and once again the layers of new silken saree (Patta Bastra) sandle paste camphor, kasturi etc are given to strengthen the body of the Deities but in this process the "Brahma" or the life substance is neither touched nor transferred.

An Erronous Notion

Many pople have an impression that the Deities are not made of the sacred wooden log which is brought to Srikshetra for Novakalevar. That log or Daru is preserved for the next Navakalevar and the Deities are made of the log which was collected in the previous Navakalver. This impression is completely wrong and is based on rumour. The fresh collected Daru is used for carving of the Deities. However after making the idols the excess pieces of log is preserved for future to repair any part of the idols if so required. Readers are requested to remove such erronous notion from their mind.

RITUALS IN NAVAKALEVAR

The ceremony of Navakalevara as it is carried out presently consists mainly of the following five phases.

1. To find out the Draru or the divine wood and to bring it to the Temple.

   (a) Serarching of the Draru- To go in a group to the forest and to find out the daru with prescribed chraracteristics.

   (b) After finding out the daru- to perform the fire sacrifice near the tree to drive out the evil spirit rand to purify the tree.

   (c) After cutting of the tree - to bring the daru on a small crart to the temple.

2. Crarving of the wooden structure of the imrages.

3. Consecration of the imrages and the insertion of Brahmapadartha or life substance into the - imrages.

4. Buriral of the old statues and purificatory rites of the Daitas.

5. Giving the imrages their final shrape by seven layers of coverings and prainting them.

The Garland of Authorisation.

The sacred ceremony in search of the Daru begins on the tenth day of the bright fort night of the month of Caitra. It is in this particular day the Daitas come to the temple with Pati Mahapatra at about noon and while they wait outside the sanctum the Pati Mohapatra goes into the sanctum and performs a special worship of the three Deities. Four specially prepared garlands have already been offered to the Deities by the Pujapanda in the

morning. After performing the special worship the Pati Mahapatra takes down the four garlands from Balabhadra, Subhadra, Jagannath and Sudarshan which are now known as Ajnamala or the garlands of authorisation. For the sake of convenience the Daitas who are supposed to go in search of the divine wood or daru are divided in to three parts. The leader of the group consisting of some Daitas who are responsible for Balabhadra are called" Bada-Bada Daita", "Majhi bada", Daitas for Subhadra and those are responsible for Jagannath are called "Mahaprabhunka - bada" respectively. The Pati Mahapatra then distributes the three garlands of Balabhadra, Subhadra & Jagannath to the leader of the respective three groups and keeps the garland from Sudarshan for himself. We have already said that these are the garlands of authorisation. This function is very much symbolic in nature. As in our house whenever we start to do some new work, we usually take the permission from our parents or from the guardian of the family. Like wise since Lord Jagannath is the Lord of the universe that is why before setting out in search of the divine wood one must take the permission from the Lord itself. Outside the sanctum each of these three Daita chiefs are presented a silken saree or unstiched garment of about six meters in length by the storekeeper of the temple who is known as Bhitarachhu Mohapatra. The rest of the Daitas receive only a two meter piece of the same garment. Another temple servant who is known as Mekapa then applies sandal and sindur paste on the forehead of all the Daitas to mark the auspicious beginning of the journey in search of the Darus. Besides the Daitas, this silken sarees are also given to other important persons in the group. The Bhitarachhu Mohapatra then comes to the Jayavijaya gate and

binds a full length of silken saree on the fore head of the Deula Karana, Tadhau Karan and the Beherana Khuntia. The Padiya Karana, the Lenka who bears the Sudarshan Chakra and the four Vishwakarmas or the carpenters are also presented the cotton sarees for the purpose. So the group which starts its journey in search of the divine wood for Navakalevar mainly consists of Deula Karan (Temple accountant) four carpenters (Vishwakarmas to cut the trees) Lenka who holds the Sudarshan Chakra during the journey the Pati Mahapatra and other number of Daitas. Besides these persons the group also takes with them some Brahmins for performing the fire sacrifice, police constables and such other persons who are required to discharge various wordly functions.

Permission of the King -

We all know that the Thakur Raja or the King of Srikshetra Puri is the first servant of Shree Jagannath. So there is also the tradition that though the group has already been received the garland of authorisation from the Lord Jagannath itself still they have to seek a formal permission from the king of Puri.

The entire party then comes out of the Temple and proceeds to the palace of the Rajaof.Puri which is situated on the main road, a few meters away from the main temple. They go in a grand procession to the accompaniment of the music of conches, trumpets, drums etc. The moment the party arrives at Sri Nahar, the palace of King the Raja comes out to greet the party. It is here that the Viswabasu or the head of the Daitas is choosen to lead the group in search of the Darus. Then after that the King of Puri offers two metallic plates consisting of

some auspicious articles such as coconuts, areca nuts, small piece of gold, coloured threads, rice etc to his Rajaguru who in-turn presents one to Viswabasu or Daitapati the leader of the Daitas and keeps the other for himself as the representative of the brahmin members of the party. This presentation of metallic plates with those sacred articles has its symbolic significance. On the one hand it represents the formal request as order of the King to go in search of the Darus and on the other hand the sacred article are presented to the groups are specially meant to ward off all the evil in their long journey.

Jagannath Ballav Math :

The whole group then comes out of the palace of King and the procession again proceeds towards Jagannath Ballav Math (Monastery) which is situated on the left hand side of the main road in between Jagannath Temple and Gundicha Temple. This Jagannath Ballava Matha is very old in nature and it has important religious connections with the Temple of Lord Jagannath. Within its premises there is a dense big garden and as per legends it is believed that Lord Jagannath usually come here for hunting purposes. Some Pandits even equate this monastry as secret Brindavan. This place is associated with such illustrious personalities like Rai Ramananda, Chaitanya and so many great saints, sannyasins of yester years.

It is here in this monastry the entire party take rest for the night. They also stay here for one and half days to make the final preparations for their expedition. While taking rest they get themselve;s mentally prepared for the hazardous journey awaiting ahead. The party has to move only on foot and that too in their naked foot without wearing any slippers or chapalls.

They are not allowed to go by bus or to use any other transport facilities. Thatis the customs from ancient times, which is being sincerely carried out till recent times.

After taking rest for nearly one & half day the entire party then sets out to Kakatpur a place which is nearly. sixty kilometers away from Puri and the Kakatpur is famous for temple of Goddess Mother Mangala, which is situated on the banks of river Prachi.

The journey which starts from Jagannath Ballava monastry towards Kakatpur is known as "Banajaga Yatra". Bana means forest, Jaga means fire sacrifice and Yatra means joumey. Since the searching party search for the prescribed sacred Daru from forest to forest and for this they undertake strenuous journey and after finding the tree-they make fire sacrifice atthe'side of the tree- so it is called Banajaga Yatra.

The role & importance of Daitas :

The Daitas play very important role in the ceremony of Navakalebara. It is those Daitas who take charge of the Deities during the period of "anavasara", car festival and during Navakalevar, starting from the search of the divine wood, carving of the images, change of life substance even to the burial of the deities in Koili Baikuntha the burial place of Lord Jagannath. Now a simple question may arise in any body's mind that why so much importance is given to the Daitas ? The answer is very simple. The Daitas are believed to be the descendants of the Sabara Viswabasu who according to the legend worshipped Lord Jagannath in the form of Nilamadhab in a dense forest. According to the popular legend Indradyumna the King of Malwa sent his brahmin minister Vidyapati to locate Nilamadhav. Vidyapati in

course of time came in contact with Lalita the daughter of Viswabasu and fell in love with her and later married her. With the help of Lalita-Vidyapati could locate Nilamadhav for his king Indradyumna. The children born out of the marriage of Lalita & brahmin minister Vidyapati are known as Pati Mahapatra and the direct descendents of Sabar Viswavasu are known as Daitas. And from the time immemorial this tradition of Daitas continue till today. The active participation and the play of. important role during Navakalevar by the Daitas simply reminds one of the glorious past and the legend of Indradyumna, Nilamadhav & Viswabasu.

Deuli Matha :

Now let us come back to our original story. The original party after reaching Kakatpur do not go to the Temple of Mangala rather go to Deuli Matha an old ancient monastry which is one kilometer away from the main temple and the entire party stay there and take rest. Why the searching party do not go at first to the Mangala Temple but to Deulimatha ? There is also a beautiful story or so to say reason behind it. This tradition is however not that old. Most probably from 1912 this tradition of staying at Deulimatha is being followed. According to the story the temple of Mangala originally situated at the place where now the Deuli Matha actually stands. It is said once during heavy floods the statue of Mangala was washed away and was latter on found at a place where the present temple is situated. The old and abandoned temple of Mangala was then transformed into a monastry. And honouring the old tradition, the party still takes shelter in the Deuli Matha and not in the present temple of Mangala. This Deuli Matha has a spacious garden and now

in a delapidated condition. Messangers are then sent to the temple of Mangala to announce the arrival of the party from Puri.

Role of Maa Mangala :

The priest of the temple and other members of the managing committee of the temple then go to Deuli Matha to welcome the party to the Temple. The party from Puri Temple brings the Mahaprasad of Lord Jagannath and a new saree for Mangala which is handed over to the priest of Mangala. Then an extensive worship of the Mangala starts and the priest offer the Mahaprasad and new cloth to Mangala. The worships starts with the ceremonial bath and the Pandits, Acharya accompanying the party recite "Durga saptasati" mantras before the goddess. The acharya, brahmin and pati Mohapatra resides in this temple in night where as other Daitas and other functionaries return back to Deuli Matha for their stay at night.

It is believed that the goddess Mangala tells the Pati Mohapatra or to the Daitapatis in their dream the exact location and appearance of all the Darus or divine trees. And the next day the Daitas are sent to different directions to search out the prescribed trees as instructed to them by Mangala in their dream. It is however usually followed that to get clear cut instructions from Mangala the Acharya, Rajguru and Pati Mohapatra recite "Swapnavati Mantra" for 108 time before going to their bed. It has also been happened in so many years that the indication of finding out the Darus is indicated by the first flower falling down from the Mangala statue is taken to be indicating the directions in which the first Daru could be found and so on for the rest of the other three Darus.

Once the indication is available the entire Daitas are

divided into four groups and are sent to different directions to find out the divine trees for four Deities. As per the tradition and as prescribed in "Indranilamani Purana" - (a text book on the subject) only the Nima tree are used to fashion the images of Jagannath, Balabhadra, Subhadra & Sudarshan. However any other ordinary Nima trees are not acceptable for the purpose. Only those Nima trees having definite form, branches and which are characterised by certain feature which distinguish them from other common trees are only selected for Navakalever. In Indranilamani Purana book- there is clearly mentioned the exact type of location and the exact symptoms of the divine wood to be choosen for different Deities.

The following are the characteristics which are to be looked for while selecting the Daru for Lord Jagannath the Lord of the Universe.

The Daru of Lord Jagannath & It's symbol

(1) The colour of the tree should be dark or dark red.

(2) The trunk must be straight, pleasant to look at & having a height of atleast 7-12 feet high.

(3) It must have four main branches.

(4) There must be a river or a pond near the tree or it should have sorrounded by three mountains.

(5) There should be a cremation ground near the tree and it is important.

(6) There should have a Siva Temple in the neighbourhood. (7) There should not have any nests of the birds in the trees. (8) The tree should be free from parasite plants.

(9) The branches of the tree should not have been broken or struck off either by lightning or by storm.

(10) There should be ant hill near the tree or at the root of the tree.

(11) The tree must have been guarded by few snakes.

(12) The tree trunk should contain atleast two of the signs of weapons of Vishnu- that is Sankha & Chakra.

(13) The tree should be sorrounded by other trees of Varuna, Sahada & Bilva.

The Daru of Balabhadra & it's Symbol

(1) The tree should have white in colour.

(2) Normally there should be seven branches.

(3) The upper branches of the tree should be of such type- so as to resemble like the .hood of a cobra.

(4) The tree should bear the symbol of weapons of Balabhadra plough & pestle.

The Daru of Subhadra & it's Symbol

(1) The colour of the bark of the tree should have a yellowish tinge.

(2) The tree should have atleast five branches.

(3) The tree should bear the symbol of a lotus flower in its body.

The Daru of Sudarshan & It's Symbol

(1) The bark of the tree should have a reddish tinge.

(2) There must be three branches.

(3) There must be a symbol of Chakra in its body.

The trees having maximum number of signs are usually selected for the Darus. Of course the Daru of Lord Jagannath is sought about more strictly. It is only because the wood is to be

worshipped later as deity and should have some extra ordinary features which may distinguish it from such other similar trees.

Rituals in the Forest :

Once the Daru is found, the Sudarshan chakra brought by the Lenka from the main Temple of Puri is placed at the root of the tree to ward off the evil spirits. After that the surroundings of the tree are cleared of the bushes, thorns and ready for other ceremonial purpose. The Brahmins and the Acharya make themselves pure by taking bath and make a fire sacrifice near the tree chanting "Anustubha Nrishma" mantra pouring 108 times of pure ghee into the fire. Then the party of Vanayaga with the accompaniment of music move around the tree for seven times and give the tree a ritual bath. Then vermillion, sandal paste and flower is applied and a new cloth is wrapped around the trunk of the tree. The Ajnamala or the garland of authorisation of perticular Deity which has been brought from the main temple is placed on the particular tree by Pati Mohapatra there by introducing the particular deity to the divine tree. After this small worship a Yajnasala is erected on the western part of the tree. The next important rite is that of ankuraropana or the sowing of some seeds for germinations. Acharya, Brahmin & Pati Mohapatra usually take shelter near Yajnasala in the night where as all other Daitas reside in sabarapalli specially made thatched houses which are specially built on the southern side of the tree.

The ritualistic rites and the forest sacrifice near the tree continues for the days and at the end of which the worshipped weapons of axes made of gold, silver and iron are given to Vidyapati, Viswabasu and Viswakarma or the carpenter head respectively. In this order all the three first touch the divine tree

with the axes and finally all other carpenters cut down the tree with help of the iron axes. The tree should fall only in the eastern, northern or the north eastern direction. And if at all it falls in any other direction then it is considered to be inauspcious, The trunk of the tree is only required for fashioning of the images. So the main trunk is collected from the tree and the rest of the branches, leaves etc are buried underground at the very spot and no persons or persons are allowed to take any portion of the tree for their personal use.

The Daru so collected is disbarked and given a quadrangular shape which is known as "Chaupat" and it is then wrapped up in silken clothes and is now ready for its final journey to Shreekshetra Puri.

THE MYSTICAL ASPECT OF DIVINE TREES

At the best the age will be fifty or a little more. Not of a man but of a Neem tree. A healthy & a lustrous tree which was owned by Sri Brahmananda Bastia. Mr Bastia is a dedicated servant to the local Deities Niali Madhaba. Since last few years he was thinking to sell the tree - so that he can get some handsome amount to maintain his lively hood. Brahmananda is a poor man of the soil and has to toil tooth and nail to make both the ends meet. Once he decided to dispose of the tree - the news spread to every corner of the local village and neighbouring villages too. Purchasers came in number. The tree was inspected and it was accepted by most of the customers - but still the deal could not be materialised because of the price as demanded by Mr Bastia the owner of the tree. However in

the long run the deal was struck and Mr Bastia received some money as an advance also. In order to celibrate the occasion the seller Mr Bastia with the customer and some of his friends decided to have a feast under the tree. Accordingly every thing was arranged. The cooking was about to finish when some untowards incident happend which was as mysterious as adventures.

In the words of Mr Brahmanand "The cooking was going to be finished when to our utter surprisement I myself with my friends noticed that two cobras (snake) came to the spot from no where and slept near the tree at a distance from us. We did not give much importance to the incident thinking that sooner or later they will go away from where they have come from. It will be also not wise on our part to abstruct them or to strike them. Mean while some five to ten minutes must have been passed when all of a sudden we heard a peculiar heavy sound as if the entire Neem tree is shaking faced by a heavy storm of wind. With fear we were taken back and were really trembling out of fear when we looked up it came to our notice that the tree was full of hanging snakes in all its branches. The temple of Goddes Bankiori was near by. Being frightened we ran to the temple and prostrated before the Goddess for her mercy and favour. After sometime when we again looked at the tree there was nothing - no more snakes were there. Every thing was normal & calm.

This is a fact and not fiction. This incident took place, in the village of Ponimal, where the holy neem tree for the new embodiment of Sudarsan was found.

Dear reader ! Don't you believe this ? Might be Because, we are now passing through an age of scientific intelectualism.

We feel we are the masters of everything. We are proud of the fact that - nobody else knows better than us. Frankly speaking what is the status of our intelectuality ? With our limited exposure, to the vast sea of knowledge of the soul, can we be able to judge the power, of the almighty, the architect of the universe? It has become a fashion nowadays to comment over the facts and fictions relating to the deities under the mask of science. The heavenly feelings, are not at all scientific subject either to be experimented or debated. It is purely an individual's realisation of the soul and experience of the self within.

If you have not had the fortune, to see the holy trees earmarked, for the re incarnation of the deities, and the atmoshphere, there, the media reports, the gossips, the rumours can never make you feel the strange effect it created among the thousands of people, who were physically present there. As a writer, what I personally observed, of the process, I could not beleive, Is it a strange behaviour of the nature or the greatness of the creator himself ?

" Indraneelamani Puran," the epic describing the process, is explicit in all details. Really who is the author of this great epic? This is ofcourse not history but an epic, which describes the quality & nature of the desired trees, their location and the sorroundings. It has been found, that all the details as required have been exactly found by the Daitas who are insearch of Divine wood. Is it a co-incidence?

Just close your eyes for a second and think at least seriously once and say frankly, what do you think of the fact ? Are they just coincidences and fictions ? Are they not the actions of the almightly himself ? If a staunch ascetic, would have

chanced to witness the process of tracing and the effect there after, there is no doubt that he will difinitely do away with his negative thoughts. I have no doubt about it. I have seen things so I believed. I still say it is to be seen to be believed.

The holy tree for the idol of Sudarsan

T he holy Neem tree for the idol of Sudarsan was found in the village of Panimal near Niali Madhab, This village is situated on the side of the river Prachi. As narrated previously the tree will be fifty year of age. Strangely'it was looking blood red, the colour of Sudarsan. It was sorrounded by a burning ghat, a Goddess temple & a flowing river. The tree bore the signs of coonch (Sankha) and the disc (chakra). The tree was sorounded by banyan trees. The owner never dreamt that the destiny of the tree will be so bright. He even never thought the tree to be a sacred one and he decided to sell it. We know what happend after the deal. So the deal was automatically dropped. All the people avoided the deal. So at last the holy tree came to the notice of the scouts, the Daitas, and it became the sacred material for the idol of Sudarsan the armour of the almighty.

The holy tree for the idol of Lord Balabhadra

The sacred Neem tree, destined to be the idol of the great Lord Balabhadra, was traced, in the village of Ramkrishnapur on the Salepur constituency. It was the property of Sri Purnananda Samal. The tree was situated in the area where Harijans have settled. It was traced on the 13.4.96, the holy Bisubasankranti day. The Daitas found two cobras mating in the area, which is supposed to be a good omen. Under the tree there was a mole hill, a home for cobras. Near by there is a Siva temple. River Suka is flowing by the village. The village

burning ghat was near by. There was also a Sadhu with his little cottage. The tree was the tallest in the area reaching to a height of one hundred fifty feet. Sorrounding the tree, there were other auspicious plants like Bel, Tulsi and Barun etc. Two feet above the bottom of the tree, there were clearly the signs of a plough the armour of Lord Balabhadra. About eight feet high, on the trunk, the signs of conch and the disc was there. The tree was straight tall and strong. The top of the tree looked like a serpent sheilding the tree itself. Lord Balabhadra is supposed to be the chief of the serpent clan.

It is said, that about a century and half, back, a Queen named Rochhana Rani, was ruling the area. She had her staff of managers, merchants, and preists. The tree was found in the property of one of her managers, when he allowed the Harijans to settle. The tree seems as old as the story. During the present land reforms, the area is owned by Purnananda. In an exclusive interview with the writer Mr Purnanda Samal says- "This perticular Divine Neem tree was there since from his grand father Balakrushna Samal's time and as a child he had seen his grand father worshipping the tree regularly. After the sad demise of his grand father, his father Suryamani Samal continued the worship during whose time a strange thing happened. Once in a very fine morning fifty years back from now to the utter surprisement of the villagers an old saint whose name was UNUUNU BABA arrived in the village. No body knew from where he has come from. But it was noticed that the behaviour and life style of that saint was quite peculiar. After seeing this Neem tree it was he who predicted that this Neem tree is a sacred one and one day in near future it will be used as the Divine wood for carving the Deities of Jagannath Temple, Puri and the entire village will be transformed

into Shreekhsetra for thirteen days. The saint adviced Suryamani Samal and to the villagers not to cause any damage to the tree. It is said that this saint breathed his last in this village and there is a Samadhi also in his memory till date.

A forecast made fifty years back came true atlast. Strangely the whole process of cutting and loading took ex-actly thirteen days, whic may look like a coincidence. The festivity lasted for thirteen days there with a lot of people around and this again is a fact and not a fiction.

The Sacred tree for the idol of Devi Subhadra

The sacred Neem tree, destined to be the idol of Devi Subhadra, was found in the property of Shri Nilamani Samantray of village Malada, in the Astaranga block of Puri District. The tree is said to have been smelling that of sandle. Under its shade, the idols Lord Jagannath, Lord Balabhadra and Devi Subhadra were placed and prayers was offered daily. In 1977, when the previous Navakalevar took place, this tree was spotted but because, it was not that mature the scouting party, left it for the future use. The local people, waited for the occasion since 1977, declaring the tree as a sacred one.

The strangest thing about the tree was it just looked like the uterous of a woman, from the point where the branches sprouted. Along with other specified omens, this was the stranget one. Can this be called a coincidence?

The sacred Neem tree for the idol of Lord Jagannath

As you proceed towards south, from Khurda, on the national highway, after eight miles you will' find a road, towards left, you will find a village called "Dadhimachagadia". The holy tree

for the idol of Lord Jagannath was found to be located there in the premises of the property of Shree Prasanna Patnaik. The huge tree was situated, near the burning ghat with all its majesty. Towards north, there was the Somnath temple. Towards south, the temple of Goddess Bauti was situated. The circumference of the trunk of the tree was nearly twelve feet. At the foot of the tree, there was a big mole hill, which houses a lot of snakes. It seems, they were the body guards of the tree. About twenty feet above the bottom, clear signs of Lotus and the disc (Chakra) astonished everybody. Strangly there was not a single birds nest on the tree. The birds rarely come to the tree. The tree was also free from shade of other trees. About five feet away a Sahada tree, most auspicious requirement was there along with other medicinal plants. Ten feet away, there was another big mole hill, which looked like the "Garuda Sthamba" an obligatory part of any Visnu Temple. The mole hill was also thus treated and prayers offered by the devotees.

Shri Prasanna Patnaik, from whose premises the tree was located says, that the tree is there since his great grand father and will be about one hundred fifty years of age. No-body expected that this tree will have the great destiny to bear the idol of Lord Jagannath in this incarnation. But however, that since some time back in winter evenings when he went there for a walk, he has felt the fragranace of Chandan and scented flowers, as that of the temple of Lord, Jagannath. Since a couple of months, he has noticed, people offering money and other things as a prayer offering to the tree. People say the tree represents some heavenly blessings. But from where and how the thought materialised, nobody knows. So much so that nobody dreamt

about the present destiny of the tree.

Jadu, Nayak, of nearby harijan colony says that the local residents have felt some Godly presence and peace, under the shade of the tree. Because of the mole hill and the fear of snake, frequency of visitors were not there. Many a times people have also felt the presence of fragrance as Shri Patnaik has felt. He further says that the "Kalisi", the local priest of the Goddess has predicted during one of his of obsessions that the tree is destined to be the idol of Lord Jagannath. it is also told that a young man called Sanatan, once picked up a broken branch of the tree and put it on fire. He became sick immediately after the event. His father who was a Kalisi, after rituals said that the young man should go to the tree and prostrate begging excuse for the wrong deed of burning the branch. After this he became alright. From that day the tree gained the highest Godly esteem.

The writer had the fortune, to be present on the spot when the tree was cut down and loaded for transportation, Shri Ramkrishhna Daitapati a member of the previleged locating team has told some astonishing experience. It is a practice that after sorting out the required amount of the wood of the tree, the rest is to be buried in the earth so that the remaining parts will not be used for any other purpose.

After finishing all the rituals, when the party was starting on its way back to Puri, at about ten or eleven in the morning, two young men came running and prostrated before the cart loaded with the wood. They requested the Daitapati to excuse

them for having taken two pieces of wood, which they did last evening when they came to visit. They both were shaking like a leaf in heavy wind. As they were returning to their home in their scooter, they noticed two big snakes following them in the same speed as that of the scooter. Both fell down from the scooter out of fear. One friend got fractured as the other got badly wounded. They have now come back with the pieces of wood. The piece of wood was placed on the earth where other pieces of wood were placed.

There is another ritual being observed in the operation in which the divine tree gets a ceremonial bath. So the priest whose duty was to do so wentto the nearest well. He found two cobras were coiling and sleeping like a baby. During all the deep, they were there as if to keep the water pure. The sensation he had was clearly seen in his bright face, when he narrated the event.

Many people, both ordinary and saints have proclaimed the greateness of Lord Jagannath and of specially the holy trees. But then dear readers, the question arises what do you think about these matters, like to argue to find out the scientific reasoning ? During the journey of the life, many incidents take place. Some are astonishing, some are heavenly, some are coincidental. Your believing the matter is a different affair. But the matter is beyond argument, beyond scientific observation, if you are still pursuing it - it is nobody's business. It is purely a matter of belief, matter of faith, matter of self realisation of God and a matter of experience between your thought and action, body and soul.

Transportation of Daru on SAGADI

Mean while a small cart which is known as "Sagadi" is constructed to carry the Daru to temple. The divine wood is placed on that small cart and the cart is driven by — of men and women chanting Haribola, Jai Jagannath through out the journey. Once the cart reaches at Puri town large group of people and temple functionaries and sometimes even the Raja of Puri come out to greet the Daru and with the accompaniment of trumpets, drums, conches, music rejoicing & dancing they take it to the temple through its north gate.

Carving of Images

The darus of Sudarshan, Balabhadra, Subhadra & Jagannath are brought in the temple in this order and are kept in a shed specially built for this purpose known as "Darushala" situated in the northern side of the outer circle of the Temple the place is popularly known as "Koili Baikuntha" (the burial ground of the Deities). It is a strict tradition that all the Darus must reach the Temple before the annual bathing festival of the Jagannath "Snanapurnima" takes place.

Just in the next day of Snanpurnima (full moon day of Jyestha) after the Darus receiving the ritual bath simultaneously with those of four Deities- the Darus are brought to a new mandap which is known as Nirmana-Mandap. It is here at this place that the wooden structure of the Deities is carved by the carpenters belonging to the class of Daitas.

The methods and procedure adopted for carving the

images of the Deities and also the measurement of different parts of the wooden statues are a very closely guarded secret of the Daitas family. As per the family tradition the Daitas have with them some old ancient palm-leaf manuscripts which contain the details of measurement and the way & means of carving the images which are generally followed by those carpenters for fashioning of the images. Since the carving of the images is a secret ritual so the out siders are strictly prohibited to enter into this place. No body is allowed either to see or even to hear the sound of the image making.

Change of life Substance -

The fashioning of the wooden structure of the new images is usually completed by fourteenth day after Snanpurnima. So in the night of 14th lunar day the newly fashioned images are brought inside the temple from Nirman Mandap and are placed near the old statues. The old statues of four Deities are covered by a very thick layer of substances such as —resin—, stripes of cotton & silken clothes, sandal & kasturi paste etc. In order to take out the "Brahmapadartha" or the life substance from the old statues, they are stripped off all their coverings by 12th lunar day.

It is here to be specially noted that the most important ritualistic aspect of Navakalevar is the change of life substance from the old images and the insertion of the life substance into the new ones. The change of life substance is effected by four old and senior most Daitas who are choosen among the family members of daitas. On that particular night when the new images are brought inside and are placed infront of their old statues, the light inside the temple are put out. There is complete

darkness every where. The oldest senior most Daita entrusted with this sacred & secret job opens the belley of the old statue in the dead of night with his eyes blind folded and the hand wrapped up with clothes so that neither he can see nor feel the Bramapadartha (life substance) while taking out of old images and placing it in new images. Once the life substance is placed in the new one, it's cavity is closed by the Nyasadaru (a small wooden door of the cavity containing Brahmapadartha) which has been consecrated by the Brahmins earlier. With the change of life substance the most secret and important aspect of Navakalever is thus over.

Now a simple question may arise in the minds of people as to know what this Brahmapadartha is and how it looks or feels like. With the passage of time the people are more curious to know the exact mystery of this Brahmapadartha. So many theories have been advanced from time to time but the mystery is still a mystery unrevealed and is perhaps going to remain as a mystery in the coming days to come. Opinion differs from men to men. Some scholars say that it is the tooth of Buddha, some says it is nothing but mercury, some other as living Salagrama. Tantric Yantra on a metallic plate and so on. Some historian say that the statue of Jagannath might now contain the rests of the Jagannath statue burnt in 1568 by Kala Pahad at river Hooghly and which were brought to Orissa by Bisar Mohanty. Bisar Mohanty first worshipped this in Kujang in Orissa for some time and the then king Ramachandra Deva after fashioning new images inserted this Brahampadartha into the new ones in order to establish a psychological continuity of the new Jagannath with the original Jagannath. These are however

only some of the assumptions but in reality what the Bramhapadartha actually is - is better known to Lord Jagannath himself. So many futile attempts have been made in the past to unreveal the mystery of Brahmapadartha but it is still a mystery and is perhaps going to remain so.

Burial of the Images

The moment the life substance or the Bramapadartha is taken out of the image it is considered to be dead. These old dead statues are then loaded on the same cart on which the new statues had been brought in. Then they are taken to the burial ground, popularly known an Koili Baikuntha which is situated in the northern side of the Temple. This Koili Baikuntha is nothing but a beautiful garden inside the Temple. Here a pit of nine hastas deep and six hastas in diameter have already been dug and kept ready to receive the old Deities. Under the ground there is a platform too— in which red velvate is spread out. The old & "dead" wooden images of Balabhadra, Subhadra, Sudarshan & Lord Jagannath are then sunk in this pit and are covered with soil. Along with those Deities all other wooden images of chariot used during car festival such as wooden horse, parrots, Parswa Devata, apsara, sarathi etc are also buried under ground.

Once the old images are buried the Daitas and Devadasi start weeping & crying. Since Jagannath is considered to be a family member of those Daitas so the Daitas observe the rituals of impurity for the next ten days as a family man observes at the loss of his near & dear ones in society.

Giving Final Shape to the new Images

The wooden structure of the images is considered to be the only skeleton of the statues. The Sanskrit text says that the body of human being consists of seven important substance and so also the body of the Jagannath and other Deities. The body of the new Deities are wrapped up with seven layer of substances. The wooden structure is simply the bones. On these bone first perfumed oil is rubbed which represents the marrow inside the bone. Then red coloured thick threads are wrapped around the entire body which represents the veins & the blood flowing into them. Then a thick layer of musk, sandal paste & camphor is applied on the whole body which represent the flesh of the statues. This layer is then again wrapped up with strong stripes of cotton clothes which represent the skin of the statues. Finally above this layer the starch of rice or wheat flour is pasted which represent semen of the body. After infusing the statues with flesh & blood and bringing out the final shape & form of the Deities the Chitrakara or the painters paint the images with indegenous colours. However it is to be marked that the painters are not allowed to paint the pupils of the eyes of the Deities. Giving the final touch of brush in the eyes of the Deities is carried out by Brahmins which is known as Netrotsava. After this act of Netrotsava the new Deities are given a ceremonial bath inorder to make them free from the contamination which they are under gone in the hands of carpenters, painters etc. Then the public are allowed to see their God with new youth & vigour.

Once this purificatory rite is over the ceremony of Navakalevar comes to an end and on the next day that is on the

2nd day of bright half of Asadha the new Deities come out of the temple and the famous Car festival of Lord Jagannath takes place. The new Deities are greeted by thousands & thousands of immeasurable multitude of people not only of India but also from out side India.

Thus this ceremonial celebration of rituals of Navakalevar simply symbolises the cycle of death and birth in the life of all living beings - from the clutches of which the Lord of the Universe - Lord Jagannath is not even spared.

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